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ABSTRACT

This book details research from January 1975 to December 1977 on the three-year BBC Adult Literacy Project and the government-funded Adult Literacy Resource Agency (ALRA). Chapter 1 sets forth these three research objectives: effectiveness of the campaign (including the broadcast element) in reaching and holding the adult sub-literate, effectiveness of the teaching, and effectiveness of the student's learning as shown in daily life. Chapter 2 describes conduct of the research, which involved qualitative study of participant perceptions collected by interviews. The course of the literacy campaign is outlined in chapter 3. It describes the four phases--activation, organization, quality of provision, educational progress beyond literacy--and identifies major partners. Chapters 4-6 present perceptions of the campaign by the three local partners in it--organizers, tutors, and students. Administrators' and organizers' perceptions are discussed concerning ethnic minority groups, general financial climate, recruitment of tutors, training, students, and drop-out rates. Volunteer tutors' perceptions concern reasons for volunteering, roles, training, and students. Students' perceptions focus on reasons for enrolling, experiences responsible for literacy difficulties, tuition, and dropping out. Chapter 7 identifies questions raised by the research that providers need to reflect upon for developing perspectives. (YLB)

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ADULT LITERACY

a study of its impact

by
H. A. JONES
and
A. H. CHARNLEY

CE 028 262

B.B.C./NIAE Research Team Report
on ADULT LITERACY
initiatives in England and Wales, 1975-1977, funded by the department of Education and Science.

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Abbreviations

AEO	Assistant Education Officer (with responsibility for adult education)
ALRA	Adult Literacy Resource Agency
ALSSF	Adult Literacy Support Services Fund
APL	Adult Performance Level
ATV	Associated Television Company
BAS	British Association of Settlements and Social Action Centres
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
COI	Central Office of Information
CVS	Council of Voluntary Service
DES	Department of Education and Science
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESN	Educationally Subnormal (a distinction is sometimes drawn between ESN(M) and ESN(S) for those moderately and those severely subnormal; we have not made this distinction)
FE	Further Education
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
IBA	Independent Broadcasting Authority
ILR	Independent Local Radio
ITV	Independent Television
LEA	Local Education Authority
NIAE	National Institute of Adult Education
TOPS	Training Opportunities Scheme
TSA	Training Services Agency

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The pursuit of universal adult literacy has been one of the foundation-stones of adult education in this country. In the eighteenth century, the efforts of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, of the Welsh Circulating Schools and of the earliest Adult Schools centred on the ability to read the Bible. The Sunday Schools and night schools of the early nineteenth century had a similar, if more secular, emphasis on reading and writing; and even the Mechanics' Institutes included such instruction in their programmes.

From the 1870s, however, elementary schooling became universal and compulsory, and it seemed that illiteracy was being tackled at its root, among the children, and that it must wither away. Colour was lent to this view by the growth of the popular press and the spread of popular literature in the later nineteenth century and it was then easy for people comfortably to assume that any who reached adult life without the ability to read and write were either hopeless dullards or reprehensibly lazy.

When therefore a century later — a century of massive development and massive expenditure in education — this assumption began to be questioned, with figures of two million claimed for those with defective basic education, the reaction was of astonishment, if not scandal. This coincided with a growing public disenchantment with the escalating cost of public education and the apparently inadequate pay-off in standards of attainment.

A few pioneers had indeed been running adult literacy programmes for some years: Haviland (1973) traced a growth, in England, from 10 groups in 1950 to some 240 by 1973. And a few researchers had been uncovering unpalatable facts about reading habits as well as reading levels, which had largely passed unremarked. Smedley (1953), for instance, had found that day-release students read very little (56 per cent of his subjects never used a public library) and what they did read was trivial and ephemeral.

What caused a change in attitudes in the 1970s, however, was a coincidence of several factors which were brilliantly blended into a campaign with considerable political and social impact.

These included the BBC's proposal for a major adult-educational project on literacy, the concern for the educationally disadvantaged expressed in the Russell Report and the subsequent pressure for Government action in that direction, the disclosures of a report on *The Trend of Reading Standards* by the National Foundation for Educational Research (Start and Wells, 1972), and the campaign organised under the title 'Right to Read' by the British Association of Settlements, in whose centres much of the pioneering work, especially in the use of volunteer tutors for one-to-one tuition, had been going on.

Here was an educational movement of a new kind, and when the Government announced the establishment of the Adult Literacy Resource Agency with a million-pound grant, there was a widespread feeling of a fresh start being made upon a newly-descried and deeply important challenge. There were undoubtedly some new features: there was to be a major output of broadcasting coordinated with local tuition; there was to be a national referral service; the recruitment of an army of volunteers to do most of the teaching; and a new Government-sponsored agency to dispense the resources: all this at a time of severe restraint on educational spending. Small wonder that the response was ambivalent. Many adult educators, frustrated by prolonged Government failure to respond to the Russell Report, saw in the literacy campaign an exciting opportunity to press forward into new areas; but others saw it as yet another competitor for diminishing funds and a consequent threat to the rest of their work.

It was this situation in its variety and complexity that the National Institute of Adult Education was asked to study. In the autumn of 1974, following an approach by Donald Grattan, Controller of Educational Broadcasting at the BBC, and Arthur Stock, Director of the NIAE, the DES established the joint research project that is the subject of this book. The terms of reference indicate the complexity of the study. These were:

a) to assess the role of broadcasting in gaining the attention, overcoming the inhibitions and stimulating and sustaining the efforts of illiterate adults and their tutors;
b) to investigate the combinations of elements in the range of motivational and instructional media (including those associated with broadcasting), that are found appropriate to different types of learner and teacher; and

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c) to investigate the correlation between the different types of learning situation investigated above, and subsequent social benefits of increased literacy in family, job, leisure and other relationships and life styles.

The problems of the research and the way in which it was carried out are described in Chapter 2. In brief, however, what the prescription amounted to was a study of:

a) the effectiveness of the campaign in reaching and holding the adult sub-literate;
b) the effectiveness of the teaching; and
c) the effectiveness of the student's learning as shown in his or her daily life.

In other words, the campaign could be looked at through the eyes of the three local partners to it — the organisers, the tutors, and the students. The three main chapters of this book therefore present the perceptions of these three groups: Chapter 4 tells how it was seen by those responsible for the planning and organisation, for the publicity, for the training and supervision of the tutors, for the placing of students and the provision of teaching materials and equipment. Chapter 5 tells how it appeared to the tutors, meeting their students week by week and grappling with the range of problems that cropped up; and Chapter 6 tells the story from the students' viewpoint.

Unfortunately, what this research cannot explore is the experience and reaction of the non-participants. If there are indeed 'two million adults with problems of reading, writing and spelling', as the television programmes said, then the campaign has brought in about one in thirteen of them. One can speculate about the rest: How many of them remain unaware of the possibility of help, despite the publicity? How many of them are still too shy and shame-faced to come forward? Or, for that matter, how many of them are living perfectly adequate lives without feeling any need for literacy?

This brings up the question of definition: Who is illiterate? Clearly, objective tests based on children's reading ages are inappropriate. There is much evidence that adults have more difficulty with the little words which an ordinary seven- or eight-year old can manage than with polysyllables that look more advanced, for the big words (usually nouns, like *marmalade, carburettor,* or *Wolverhampton Wanderers)* are used in contexts. The whole notion of competence in daily life — which is presumably an aim of literacy teaching — depends en-

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tirely on the contexts in which people operate in the real world. Are there not indeed contexts — like legal documents or obtuse official regulations — that will defeat the literacy of the best-educated of us? If people are in fact coping with their lives without literacy, can they be judged to be functionally incompetent and therefore in need of education? On this basis, the only working definition of an adult sub-literate seems to be 'one who knows he is'. It is the *perception* of his inadequacy, attested by his willingness to seek tuition, that includes him in the category.

Yet for an educator this must seem unduly limiting. The delights of reading, the worlds of new experience that reading can open up, the access to qualification and advancement that can be gained only through reading and writing, are all enlargements of the scope of life that the serious educator will wish to bring within the grasp of everyone, whether they see the need or not. And for those who *have* seen the need and sought help, the simpler levels of literacy will soon, if the educational milieu is right, be felt to be inadequate. What many are now calling 'post-basic literacy' is a pressing demand.

These are the kinds of issue that emerge in this book. As we explain in Chapter 2, we are not concerned — indeed we could not be concerned — with statistical norms. What we seek to report is the quality of the experience that people have undergone in their various forms of participation in their literacy schemes — what it felt like to have to plan and organise for this new demand, to volunteer for the unfamiliar role of personal tutor to another adult, or to confess to others the educational inadequacies that you have been at pains to conceal for so long. In the kilometres of tape from our interviews there are eloquent and often moving testimonies to the range and depth of that experience, and it is the flavour of these that we have tried to convey. Wherever possible we do this in the words of the people themselves, after the fashion of that neglected classic *Learn and Live* (Williams & Heath 1936).

The book is written primarily for those who are themselves in this work or who are interested in its features. To pretend that we have prescriptions for success, however, would be to falsify the picture. Literacy tuition is perhaps the most personal of all forms of education and therefore subject to the widest variation from person to person. By trying to reflect the full range of that variation we hope we may help each participant to see his place in the whole picture.

CHAPTER 2
THE CONDUCT OF THE RESEARCH

The terms of reference of this research have been set out in Chapter 1. It is sufficient here to recall the three main objectives: the effectiveness of the campaign (including the broadcast element) in reaching and holding the adult sub-literate; the effectiveness of the teaching; and the effectiveness of the student's learning as shown in his daily life.

The research was managed by Alan Charnley, Research Officer of the NIAE. The Steering Committee contained representatives of the DES, the NIAE and the BBC. Observers also attended from ALRA, from Wales, and from the parallel researches in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Three research associates, Dr A. Ghazzali, John Holmes and David Stringer, were appointed to carry out the field work. Dr Charnley and Professor Jones also undertook parts of the field enquiries and other members of the Committee, particularly HMI and the BBC members, supplied information from their special knowledge.

The research lasted from January 1975 to December 1977, covering a substantial period of the broadcasts and most of the life of the ALRA. This conferred an advantage in that the *development* of literacy schemes could be observed and trends discussed. Some of the features that were thought indispensable by the planners of early schemes fell into a minor place as experience accumulated; and conversely, unforeseen problems arose as the numbers of students grew.

Problems of the research design

In another sense however the timing of the research period added to the already formidable problems of this kind of research.

A base-line to start from was the first problem. Clyne (1972) had found that 52 per cent of local education authorities claimed to be making some sort of provision for adult illiterates and Haviland (1973) estimated the number under tuition in 1972 as just over 5,000. But there was little evidence of the level of work or its character and location. Some of the students were known to be incorporated into classes in 'Basic Education' or 'General Education'; others were receiving one-

to-one teaching at settlements or other centres; some work was going on in hospitals and training centres for the mentally handicapped; there was tuition in prisons and in the armed forces. But it was fragmented and mostly small-scale, deriving usually from the enthusiasm of an individual within a larger educational service to which literacy teaching remained marginal.

As there was a complete absence of data about participants in the pre-1974 schemes — data such as ages, personal characteristics, educational and social background, rates of progress and of drop-out — there was no base from which measurement could begin, for the campaign had already run through its first phase before the research started. The problem of the base-line for the research, however, went beyond the lack of information on what was already happening. It related to expectations of what was about to happen. The effect of the campaign was to fill local education authority staff with alarm at the prospect of thousands of these new clients swarming upon them with demands that they had not the means of meeting. If some quantitative assessment was to be made of, say, the effect of broadcasting, was this to be measured against the 5,000 already involved, in their special minority circumstances, or against the two million now expected?

The stimulus to join was a second problem. The BBC literacy programmes always ended with an invitation to telephone the referral service and there is no doubt that this facility was of immense importance. But as the campaign developed many other forms of publicity came into play, local radio, local newspapers, employers, libraries, the adult literacy symbol often called the 'logo' displayed in shops and houses. Even when a student was known to have entered the scheme through the referral service it could not be known whether that was the sole stimulus or merely the last of a series that had started from some quite different source. As one organiser said: 'We know of men who've walked about for weeks with our address in their pockets before they finally knocked on the door; and no doubt there are some who haven't arrived yet.' Totting up numbers of telephone calls would tell a partial, and perhaps a false tale.

Confidentiality was perhaps the most serious constraint. The stigma that was widely believed to attach to illiteracy induced everyone, especially in the early stages of the campaign,

to assert the absolute confidentiality of the process by which a student was brought into a scheme. Once the name had been given to a referral officer it was not to be disclosed to anyone who was not immediately involved. So the research team could not have access to the names of those referred to a particular local authority area and the customary techniques of selecting a statistical sample could not be used. The sensitiveness of this point is well illustrated by the following extract from a letter which the BBC felt obliged to send to local referral officers in June 1975:

> Lastly it is important to record that all referral information should be treated as private. For non-readers, approaching a literacy scheme is rather like going to the doctor. They need to have the assurance that their names and addresses and personal details will be regarded as CONFIDENTIAL.
>
> This is particularly important in your area where you will know that a Research Project is being conducted by the NIAE. All parties to the research including the BBC are most anxious that no student should be contacted by the Researchers *without the prior permission of the student concerned having been obtained,* by either yourself or the class teacher or Scheme Organiser concerned.

The teaching situation presented another research problem. The research brief refers to 'different types of learning situation' and some of the distinctive types are easy to identify. But, again in the early stages, the most usual mode was one-to-one tuition, by a volunteer, in the home of either the student or the tutor. How could this private situation be independently observed? Organisers themselves found it almost impossible to monitor such teaching and rarely felt able to enter the homes to see what was happening, for fear of impairing the fragile relationship on which the tuition rested. If a research team were to attempt direct contact with such pairs, they had to accept that they could never witness the true situation and that they could expect to be admitted by only the more robust pairings.

The methods chosen

Thus it was clear from the outset that this could not be a conventional statistical exercise, at least as far as the students were concerned. Other forms of research had to be considered. The Steering Committee had a preference for a qualitative study anyway, and the third part of the terms of reference — that dealing with the effect of the learning on people's lives and relationships — implied such an approach.

We were helped by two American studies. The University of Texas had recently published the first results of its Adult Performance Level research, an attempt by means of a large-scale survey to establish criteria of functional competence in the business of daily living. Soon afterwards Professor Mezirow and his associates published, under the title *Last Gamble on Education*, the results of their study of the Adult Basic Education programmes in all the major cities of the USA. These two researchers had used different methods and it was possible to examine them in the light of our objectives and constraints.

The first part of 1975 therefore was devoted to a piloting exercise among tutors and organisers. A questionnaire was designed and tested, and then distributed to 400 tutors in literacy schemes in various parts of the country. The intention was not only to assemble information about the tutors (for little was known about the volunteers who by then were being recruited), but also to establish contacts through which access to their students could later be gained. Where the tutors were agreeable, we asked them also to complete a questionnaire on behalf of their students.

The results of this exercise were disappointing, but not unexpected. Not only was the rate of return of the questionnaires very low, but too many of those returned were incomplete and very little useful reference was made to students. This suggested that postal or indirect approaches would not establish the degree of confidence between the research team and individual tutors (and therefore students) that was necessary if valid information was to be extracted.

The incompleteness of the replies showed another aspect. It was clear that many of those approached, who of course were at a very early stage of their involvement in a literacy scheme, had not thought through what they were about. Training schemes were embryonic, supervisory staff were few in number and overstretched, and contact of tutors with one another was rudimentary. Tutors were therefore concentrating on the immediate task in hand — little more than next week's lesson — and the values and objectives of their activities were dim outlines on the horizon. There is then the risk that a questionnaire, however carefully devised, brings simply a snap answer or a guess at what the questioner wants said.

Meanwhile the research team had been visiting local schemes and getting to know the participants. What they learned in

these informal contacts was so much more significant than the written questionnaires that this was clearly the way in which the research should proceed. It could not be a national study: it had to concentrate on selected areas where a research associate could become known and trusted, where he could be accepted as part of the landscape and could therefore build up contacts with tutors and then with the students over a long period of time.

At about this time HM Inspectors were conducting their survey into literacy provision and they were able to give advice about places in which a research worker could well be located. After various consultations we selected six districts, which cannot be named in this report because of the promises of confidentiality that we gave. Each represented only part of a local authority area and they were selected to give a spread of social, cultural and economic milieux. Two were mainly industrial districts of the North, one a very rural part of Eastern England, one a more populous part of a Midland shire, and two were in the London conurbation. Each of the field team took two of these areas and spent as much time as he could in visits and interviews with participants in local literacy schemes. Thanks to collaboration from the National Association for Remedial Education we received information on developments in Wales; and the attendance at the Steering Committee of research workers from the parallel studies in Scotland and Northern Ireland added further dimensions of information.

At a somewhat later stage, we paid visits to 35 (out of the 104) local education authorities to interview the administrators and organisers and to gather their perceptions. By placing the records of these interviews beside the reports of HMI and of ALRA, we were able to construct a sketch of the country as a whole to compare with the more detailed pictures of the six research areas. There was a high degree of congruence between them and we concluded that the selected areas were adequately representative.

What we were now seeking was the reality of the literacy experience as perceived by the participants. The researchers started with no hypotheses. They went about with their ears open, and, wherever possible, their tape-recorders switched on, and when the first meetings of the team were held it was obvious that by this method a vast amount of highly significant material was being gathered. Wide differences of perspective

were revealed in the recordings, but important common elements were emerging. An aide-memoire for the interviewers was constructed on the basis of these early discussions and thereafter the field team continued with their regular programme of interviewing tutors and students. The method is reliable only if complete confidence can be established that the research is a genuinely open enquiry and that its boundaries are set by the interviewee: at no point must the enquiry interfere with the process of learning or intrude upon the relationship between tutor and student. The tact and sensitivity with which the team operated is attested by the fact that in their dealing with hundreds of students, tutors and organisers over two and a half years, not a single complaint of intrusion was made.

This method is enormously time-consuming. Arrangements have to be made for the interview in advance, the conversation itself may last for two or three hours and it then has to be transcribed as soon as possible after the interview so that explanatory notes can be added about the non-verbal elements — nods, smiles, facial expressions, gestures, the nature of the pauses that the tape records as mere silence. Then the manuscript has to be interpreted and analysed into categories that have been agreed with the rest of the team. But the end result is a genuine and intelligible statement of the student's real world, *his* values, *his* aspirations, *his* perceptions of his difficulties and his achievements; and gradually, as these statements accumulate, there develops a picture of the general world in which these students and tutors operate. The generalisations however are qualitative and not quantitative, for a single insight by a single student may be more perceptive and enlightening than any amount of word-counting.

The method follows from that of Mezirow and his team. It is based on Glaser & Strauss's 'grounded theory' as Mezirow developed it into what he calls 'synchronic induction'. The hypotheses emerge from the interpretation and analysis of the first research data. These are then tested against further primary data from further field work, and against information from other available sources, and the hypotheses are refined or modified by discussion among the team. This process can be repeated as often as time and the nerves of the team will allow.

One value of the method, in qualitative studies such as the present one, is that it accepts and allows for the subjective element of the researcher. He is not seeking statistical absolutes

by excluding all but one of the variables. Rather he is attempting to incorporate into his perception of reality as much as can be encompassed of the total reality of his subjects. It is by their perceptions that men take decisions, act, respond to others and interpret their experiences. The research therefore collects perceptions: it aims at what men believe to be the stage on which they are performing and the part they are playing. But these perceptions are mediated through the perceptions of the researcher who then has to submit them to the interpretation of his fellows in the team and the final picture (if it can ever be final) emerges from their complex interplay. The perceptions become perspectives.

Reports and working papers were prepared at various stages for study by the Steering Committee. These are included in the archives of the research. In the last three months of 1977 each of the research associates prepared a full final report on his area of work and these have been submitted to the DES. The transcripts, tapes and interview notes will be lodged with the NIAE.

The mass of evidence is awesome. Each of the field reports constitutes a weighty book and contains a great store of direct experience from many subjects. But the constraints of confidentiality which have affected the whole research preclude the publication of all this primary material, at least for a period of time. So the present report, which surveys the material of the field reports and accompanies them in the final submission to the DES, is designed to give the broad outlines of the generalisations to which the primary material leads. It will not be possible to quote all the corroborative evidence, nor always to indicate the course of thought and argument that leads to a general statement. But we believe that those involved in literacy schemes, and even more those engaged in the enlargement of literacy tuition into general schemes of adult basic education will be less interested in the research detail than in the range of experiences presented in the next chapters and the general picture drawn in the final one.

CHAPTER 3
COURSE OF THE CAMPAIGN

Adult education in England and Wales is a pluralist activity. Many traditions and organisations contribute to its present variety and whilst this may confuse some observers, especially those from abroad who are used to centralised systems, it is also a source of great strength. The literacy campaign is a good illustration: it brought together voluntary and statutory bodies, local and national agencies, citizen volunteers and professional staff, broadcasters, employers, libraries, as well as social and welfare organisations, all converging on the needs of a self-selected band of disadvantaged adults. That is why it can properly be described as a campaign, although the degree of coordination between the various participants was often uncertain and sometimes unknown to individuals among them.

To understand the course of the campaign it is necessary to identify the major partners in it, though we shall not repeat much of the detail given, for example, in the annual reports of ALRA, the publications of the BBC, and elsewhere.

The initiatives were at two levels, national and local. The national bodies included the media and the central agency (ALRA); the local providers were voluntary organisations and local education authorities. The relationship between them shifted as the campaign progressed. Accordingly, for the purposes of the research, we have treated the campaign as passing through four successive phases:

Phase I, up to mid-1974, when the main concern was *activation;*

Phase II, from autumn 1974 to the beginning of 1976, when the main concern was *organisation;*

Phase III, from early 1976 to early 1978, when the main concern was the *quality of provision;* and

Phase IV, from the setting up of the Adult Literacy Unit in April 1978; the concern for quality of provision now comes to include *educational progress beyond literacy*.

The period of the research, from January 1975 to December 1977, thus spanned Phases II and III, but the base line from which the research began had to include the closing stages of the first phase.

Phase I had been dominated by the voluntary organisations and their pressure for national recognition of adult illiteracy as a problem. That campaign, mounted by BAS under the title 'A Right to Read', had an influence out of all proportion to the small number of centres at which tuition was then in progress.

The object at that stage was the involvement of the public education service, for BAS recognised that the voluntary organisations alone could not meet the extent of the need they were claiming. They made effective use of the estimate of two million adults with inadequate literacy and published case studies of the day-to-day problems such people met. One or two broadcasts at this time (such as Thames TV *Good Afternoon* and BBC *Woman's Hour)* quoted these figures and found an instant and dramatic public response.

It was not the intention, however, that the campaign should be wholly taken over by the state. The voluntary bodies have continued to be an important feature of total provision (some 80 of them were identified at a conference in June 1977), and their influence can be seen in a number of ways. First, they had shown the need and its nature. Secondly, because of their own voluntary character they introduced the idea of the unpaid volunteer acting as tutor. Thirdly, because much of their tuition by volunteers had been carried on in one-to-one pairs, this pattern of tuition came to be widely adopted by others. Fourthly, because they were often associated with local advisory centres or social organisations such as Councils for Voluntary Service, they placed great emphasis on the process of matching student and tutor and were able to show how contacts with social welfare bodies could be used for recruitment of students. A number of them have also published anthologies of student writings and booklets for tutors and organisers.

Phase II began in late 1974 when the activation of Phase I was showing its effect and the major national initiatives appeared. The features of this phase were the impact of the media, the effects of government funding through ALRA, and the various styles of provision adopted by LEAs in response to what was expected to be the demand.

First there was the announcement of the three-year **BBC Adult Literacy Project**, with a commitment by the BBC of £800,000 to produce two television series, Levels 1 and 2 (See Appendix I), for adult illiterates and supporting series on radio to train volunteer tutors and to give reading practice to

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students. There would also be accompanying workbooks for students and handbooks for tutors.

The project had two separate but parallel aims: first, to make contact with potential students and encourage them to seek help by reducing feelings of anxiety; and secondly to mobilise potential volunteer tutors. Direct instruction in reading and writing skills would be kept to a minimum, especially in the Level 1 series.

Every attempt would be made to transmit the television programmes at popular viewing times and the style would be avowedly entertaining so as to increase the likelihood of non-readers seeing a programme by chance. For shift workers and for those who might be embarrassed at viewing in a family or social group, there would be additional off-peak placings. Piloting of the first series of television programmes, with the aid of groups of students and tutors in various parts of the country, took place in October 1974 and again in June 1975.

Meanwhile, in May 1975, the broadcasters' involvement in the drive to recruit volunteer tutors began, with items in a number of current affairs programmes; and the *Adult Literacy Handbook* was issued by BBC Publications. This was designed to accompany the radio series for tutors scheduled for October but was issued early to be used in training courses during the summer.

The BBC team energetically publicised their project by every means possible. The appointment in September 1974 of Jenny Stevens as special liaison officer for the project ensured the maximum transmission of information to and from the field practitioners. Reference to the literacy campaign on a number of BBC radio and television programmes in 1975, including *Panorama* and the Jimmy Young show on Radio 2, produced a large and immediate public response. In July 1975, TESCO, the supermarket chain, agreed to display the literacy symbol around their stores and to give away at their check-out points 1,200,000 sample units of the BBC students' book; while W. H. Smith, the booksellers, printed special posters and display material about the project and made them available to the entire book trade. What was still needed was a communication link with potential students, for the essence of the project was that they should be put in touch with local sources of help.

The answer was a telephone link-up service, but non-broadcast activity on this scale could not be funded from BBC

licence revenue. Prolonged negotiations with charitable trusts finally produced £7000 a year for three years from the Cadbury Trust, £75,000 over three years from the Ford Foundation and smaller amounts from elsewhere. A central telephone service was set up in London, with similar services for Wales (Caerphilly), Scotland (Edinburgh), and Northern Ireland (Belfast). The intention was that names and addresses of callers, whether seeking help or offering it, would immediately be despatched to the referral officer of the appropriate local authority.

The service began on 1 October 1975, just before the first television broadcast. From November 1975 short experiments were made from time to time with regional telephone numbers in eight different areas of England. The London number however, like those in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, continued in regular use throughout the campaign. In 1976 a specially formed trust, the Adult Literacy Support Services Fund, took over the operation of the referral services.

The 'Level 1' television series, now called *On the Move*, started on 12 October 1975. It was shown at 6.05 pm every Sunday, immediately after the national news on BBC1, with repeats on the following Thursday lunchtime and again on Saturday morning. Soon after, the radio series of eight 30-minute programmes began, with the title *Teaching Adults to Read*.

A good deal of publicity and information about literacy schemes was also given by BBC local radio stations but this was not part of the central BBC project and is better regarded as an element of local cooperation. Moreover, it belongs rather more to Phase III than to Phase II, as also does the widespread coverage given by Independent Television.

The second element in the inauguration of Phase II was the **Adult Literacy Resource Agency**. The Government's intention of making an earmarked grant for adult literacy was announced on 19 July 1974 in the context of proposed consultations about the Russell Report, and by the beginning of 1975 the National Institute of Adult Education had accepted the invitation of the DES and the Scottish Education Department to establish the Agency to administer a grant of £1 million for the financial year 1975/76. The reason for this Government initiative was the need to help LEAs and others to meet the expected rapid increase in demand for adult literacy tuition. The funding was of a pump-priming nature aimed at

establishing adult literacy tuition as an integral part of the LEAs' provision for adult education.

The impact of ALRA upon Phase II can be seen from the terms of the grant. Allocations could be made to LEAs and relevant voluntary organisations for:

a) audio-visual and other technological aids;
b) teaching materials, including those prepared or commissioned by the Agency;
c) programmes of training for adult literacy tutors (paid or voluntary) and for trainers of tutors;
d) the improvement of voluntary organisations' premises for literacy tuition; and
e) assisting research or special projects.

The first invitation to LEAs to claim grants from the Agency went out in February 1975, when their financial estimates for 1975/76 were virtually finalised. The Agency could therefore insist that anything for which funds were claimed was in fact new activity. This encouraged authorities to review their provision and enabled them to think out a policy of development in the new situation.

They were further assisted in this direction by the Agency's Advisory Panel which brought together experienced practitioners, some of whom had already begun to work together in an informal way on a BAS literacy project. During 1975 the Agency produced a *Lesson Kit for Trainers,* a *Resource Pack for Volunteer Tutors,* and a series of bi-monthly *Newsletters.*

The first of these, the *Lesson Kit for Trainers,* is an example of the cooperation that was beginning to emerge. BAS had already convened a group to prepare such a kit before ALRA was set up. It would obviously be such an important central resource that the Agency arranged with the BAS group for its rapid production on the Agency's behalf and over 2000 copies of the kit and its cassette supplement were issued, most of them free to LEAs for use in their training courses.

The subsequent *Resource Pack* gave volunteer tutors a wide range of adaptable material for different techniques to suit students at all stages, with ideas and suggestions about phonic skills, handwriting, spelling, access skills and so on. Each LEA received a free issue of these packs and many authorities bought extra copies.

Despite its title, however, and despite the utility of these publications, the Agency's largest contribution at this stage

was not in the provision of resources but in the promotion and funding of training — first, a cadre of trainers and then, through them, the local organisers, tutors and volunteers. This was a crucial element in the whole campaign, to which it will be necessary to return later.

The third element in Phase II was the response of the **local education authorities.** They could hardly be expected to view with equanimity the prospect of large additional provision. No one could foretell how many of the estimated two million adults would come forward, but the publicity generated by the BAS campaign of Phase I and the BBC project in Phase II demanded some contingency planning. The LEAs had indeed begun to make more provision for adult literacy in 1974/75: a survey of 85 authorities in England and Wales carried out by HMI before Easter 1975 showed some 17,000 students under tuition, as compared with Haviland's 5000 in England in 1972. But education budgets were at a standstill, if not actually cut, and in the face of the expected demand there was wide variation between authorities and much uncertainty for their staffs.

Two aspects of this uncertainty relate particularly to the beginning of Phase II. The first was that the literacy project came hard on the heels of the reorganisation of local government in 1974. The amalgamation of local authorities that took place then had not settled down, and in many places education officers were still struggling with newly defined areas that contained quite different systems of education. Nowhere was this problem more acute than in adult education, for which there had already been a great variety of organisational forms. Attempts by the new authorities to move towards standard practices produced uncertainty for the professional staff, and sometimes downright friction. The climate for receiving a new demand could hardly have been less propitious.

The second feature lay in the uncertainties of the adult education services themselves. Before 1974, there was little literacy tuition and most of it was undertaken by voluntary organisations or in special locations such as prisons or mental hospitals. Not many adult education staff had any experience of adult literacy; and it has to be said that not many seemed to want it. Accordingly, in a number of areas the initial moves were made by the schools' remedial service of the LEA, who tended to bring into this adult work an experience and a knowledge of methods and materials that had been gained

among slow-learning children. The tutors in such areas were often able to draw on plentiful stocks of books and teaching aids, kits and reading schemes which the remedial service had to hand, but which were of doubtful application to adults. In areas where the adult education service was in charge however, there was a demand for methods and materials suited to adults. But the financial climate made it unlikely that these could be acquired in time and on an adequate scale.

Adult educators however are used to making the best of a bad job and this was the prevailing mood about literacy. Whatever demands the broadcasts were going to create, the adult education service would have to do its best to cope; and perhaps the demands would not be as overwhelming as the campaign forecast. The anxieties were about the speed with which a service could be built up and about the quality of that service, given the general expectation that volunteer tutors would be used on a large scale.

This anxiety was felt in particular about the need for a local referral procedure. In each education office there had to be one central point at which referrals from the London telephone service could be received, for that service could not locate addresses more precisely than in a county or metropolitan borough. The transmission of the name and address to the local coordinator followed very quickly and although there were inevitable local delays at the busy times, the procedures were carefully planned and taken seriously.

The announcement of the ALRA came as a welcome relief: here at last was some certainty of finance, and in preparing their submissions to ALRA, education officers were able to look at their provision and try to construct a rational scheme. The policy lines they adopted were of three general kinds:

a) to augment the existing adult education service so that it could give special attention to literacy;
b) to construct, within adult or further education, a special branch with its own staff to deal with remedial adult education or with disadvantaged groups;
c) to regard adult illiteracy as a passing phenomenon and to set up ad hoc arrangements that could easily be ended when the problem had disappeared. (ALRA's one-year life, as originally announced, seemed to encourage that approach.)

Whatever the line of policy, however, the business of setting a scheme in motion, with all the immediate difficulties,

absorbed the attention of LEA officers at this time: most of them were so intent on getting something into being by October 1975 that they had little time to worry about the likely extent of its adequacy. But there was also a sense that, despite the cold winds of economy, they were moving with a tide of public opinion, created by the media and the Government's grant; and if this tide of opinion did not wash down large resources at least the awareness of it encouraged optimism.

In order to show how these policy decisions and administrative plans were realised in practice at this time, we now indicate some of the perceptions — often no more than expectations or guesses — of the tutors and students whom we interviewed at this early stage of Phase II.

The use of volunteer tutors was a novelty in LEA circles but was readily accepted. Organisers, impressed by the common sense and commitment of their volunteers, felt confident that with a little training they would be able to cope. For it was expected that most of the students would be poor readers, if not total beginners, and teaching one such student to read did not seem a difficult task.

Training proceeded rapidly, stimulated by ALRA. At Easter 1975 HMI had found some training in most LEAs, but implied that the extent was not great; by March 1976 ALRA reported that 33,272 volunteers out of a total of 41,000 had been trained.

The trainers were often from the schools' remedial service and the concentration in the courses was upon the practical aspects of teaching literacy skills. The courses were inevitably short, usually some six to ten sessions of two hours, which represented the trainers' estimate of how much the volunteers would accept and how much was needed to enable them to start. But it was also expected that there would be regular in-service meetings of tutors, and continuing personal supervision by local coordinators. Exactly how this supervision was to be set up seems not to have been seriously examined at the time and in the event many tutors could not or did not attend.

Despite many complaints about the lack of teaching materials suitable for adults, little attention was given in the early training courses to the use of the broadcasts. The piloting and the advance publicity had given a good impression of the aim and content of the programmes but they were thought of simply as a stimulus to recruitment. The rich potential of the

broadcasts as a source of material, ideas, and points of departure for learning was ignored throughout, and the trend was discernible in those early training courses.

Matching for one-to-one tuition was also a matter of close attention at this time. Most of the previous LEA teaching had been in groups or classes (over 80 per cent according to the HMI report) but in the voluntary schemes carefully matched pairs for one-to-one tuition were the norm. Much was made of this process in the early courses and conferences for organisers and trainers, and since volunteers outnumbered students in those days, careful selection seemed to be the right course.

In some schemes the process began with a long personal interview with the student and a panel interview with the volunteer which produced a dossier on each, from which an assessment of compatibility could be made. Elsewhere, it depended more on diagnostic testing of the student's ability in reading and an estimate of a tutor's readiness to cope with that level.

Testing, however, was already becoming a controversial issue, whether for diagnosis or for evaluating progress. The standardised reading-age tests for children were often used because there was nothing else, but there was a growing dissatisfaction with them and a tendency to use three simple levels of description: non-readers, semi-literates and 'spellers'.

Privacy was also much discussed at this time. The assumption was almost universal that the students would be shamefaced about their condition, to be treated with great tact and sensitivity, and above all to be assured of privacy and confidentiality in all their transactions. This belief also contributed to the readiness with which home tutoring, either at the student's or the tutor's house, was accepted as a normal mode. There was little evidence at this stage that organisers were aware of the problems that home tuition would bring, for example in maintaining contact with the pairs, or in giving continuing support and guidance to the tutor. On the other hand there is no doubt that this concern for the feelings of the student humanised the organisation and preserved him from the cumbersome bureaucratic practices of normal evening-class enrolment.

Of the **volunteer tutors** at this stage four fifths were women (whereas four fifths of the students were men: hence we

adopt the convention of referring to a tutor as 'she' but a student as 'he'). Some 40 per cent were graduates or qualified teachers. Teachers with remedial experience in primary schools were numerous among the latter.

Most of those we interviewed during 1975 had only a short experience but already they were finding some of their expectations unfulfilled. For example, they were surprised to find how 'normal' the student was and they often spoke admiringly of him as a person. In the business of everyday living the students showed common sense and adaptability, and were described as having evolved remarkable skills in managing without literacy.

The tutors were also surprised to find that few of the students were the absolute non-readers that the campaign appeared to aim at. The students clearly had problems with their reading, but these were varied and individual, not always conforming to the predictions of the training courses. Two different responses were shown by the tutors, the choice being often dictated by the ethos of the scheme they were in. Some adhered firmly to a reading syllabus borrowed from primary education, believing that a systematic approach was bound to sweep up all the individual problems. Others, probably a majority, attempted a 'language-experience' approach based on what they perceived as the student's particular needs. Both groups, however, spoke of the difficulties of diagnosis and wished for better diagnostic tests.

Nevertheless, not all tutors had favourable encounters with their students. Some were finding the student erratic in attendance and effort, or displaying a measure of dependency that the tutor was not willing to bear. Others were unconvinced of the student's long-term motivation and doubted his persistence in attendance. Many expressed disappointment at the student's rate of progress. No doubt in their inexperience, they had underestimated the difficulty of such progress; they had underestimated the problems of the adult learner; they had perhaps overestimated their own teaching abilities. Certainly they had failed to understand that they may have been making a greater contribution to the student's confidence and independence than his simple reading ability attested. This was where they showed most clearly their limited experience and their incomplete resolution of the discrepancies between what they had expected and what they had found.

The students were more difficult to interview at this stage. The tutors in home tuition often felt obliged to shield their students from interference and impressions of the students' expectations in early 1975 had to be based on tutors' reports or the more easily gained interviews with those working in groups.

Whereas four out of five volunteer tutors were women, four out of five students were men, mostly in manual or semi-skilled employment, although a surprising variety of occupations was represented. They had nothing in common except that illiteracy worried them. But the degree of illiteracy varied from inability to write one's name and address to a reasonable level of writing and spelling but an inability to marshal thoughts on paper. There was also an occasional student who wanted tuition in numeracy as well.

Anxiety often made them shy of speaking about their illiteracy and determined to keep the condition private. Hence, if offered one-to-one tuition, most opted for it and did everything possible to continue in that mode. They also tended to resist a change of tutor or of circumstances of meeting.

Asked about the causes of their literacy problems, almost all recalled their school experience, but not many laid blame on school or teachers. Broken schooling, movement about the country, ill-health, apathy on their own part, all these were described as contributing. But it was clear that these students were not in the habit of tracing causes back into their earlier lives and on the whole were not much interested in doing so.

Because of their long-term failure to learn, at school and in later life, they did not generally expect to make very quick progress: if they still had problems after ten years in school, they said, how could we expect to solve them in six months or a year? Their sights were not set high in any case. Few had any thought of developing their reading ability so as to read the classics; they sought a sensible level of skill for the requirements of their daily lives, in which the job and the family were the dominant features. There were, however, a few who expected instant literacy and most of these had left early from disappointment.

They did not think of themselves as illiterates in the popular, pejorative sense. But they did believe that, if others discovered their condition, they would be condemned as illiterate and idiots. Unpretentious and practical, they were managing their

jobs, homes and families in an effective way, despite their difficulties with reading and writing. They were not, and did not perceive themselves as being, problem-people.

They were however aware that there are problem-people. The students' descriptions of 'dropouts' revealed this: the characteristic 'dropouts' from their groups, they said, were those in poor housing and multiple deprivation, those with criminal records, or with psychological ills. It was not possible to ascertain how far this picture coincided with the reality. In some groups, however, there were students of these kinds, whom their fellows described as 'having troubles', and the group was consciously supportive of them, even in groups where there was an ESN student.

The students rarely commented on their tuition, except to express gratitude and confidence. Some were a little impatient with what they thought irrelevant, such as learning word-lists, but in general they were ready to leave the planning to the tutor and loyally follow the path she laid out for them, even if this meant plodding through infant-school texts.

The foregoing account of Phase II of the campaign has been set out at some length because it represents the starting point of the research period. Its implications for the research design, in terms of a base-line, are of great importance and the intentions and expectations of the main partners at this point of the campaign need to be held clearly in mind. They focus on the LEAs. The intention of BAS was to instigate a national campaign; but in the British system this means provision by the local authorities. The BBC intention was to stimulate people to seek local help, which had to be through local authorities. And a pump-priming grant for one year, towards a BBC three-year project, could have no other purpose than to start the LEAs on a road that they must then follow themselves.

Phase III therefore, dating from early 1976 to early 1978, was a period of consolidation in which the broadcasts and the telephone referrals continued but the main energy was seen among the LEA staff. After the frantic efforts to set up an organisation in Phase II, the concern shifted to the quality of the education being provided.

Central to this process was the extension of ALRA and the change in the terms of grant. Following representations from

the Agency and from the field, continued funding of the order of £1 million per annum was granted for the two years 1976/77 and 1977/78. (Separate arrangements were made for Scotland.) The terms of the grant were amended to allow the Agency to:

a) appoint full-time and part-time staff and, in consultation with the LEAs, assign them for adult literacy work in LEA areas;
b) offer an advisory and consultancy service;
c) assist voluntary organisations to enable them to further their literacy work;
d) initiate and meet the cost of training programmes; and
e) initiate and meet the cost of research and special projects.

The significance of this provision of staff was immense. Although in most areas there was no shortage of volunteer tutors, the problems of deploying, training and supporting them were found to require paid (but not necessarily full-time) staff as organisers, as trainers, as supervisory teachers, and as clerical or administrative helpers. What is interesting here is that the growth of staff numbers is not attributable solely to ALRA funding. As with other aspects of the campaign, the availability of ALRA-funded staff was a stimulus to find money for further staffing from other sources. Thus the Training Services Agency (for preparatory or so-called pre-TOPS work), the Job Creation Programme, and sometimes other local sources, as well as the LEA itself, provided staff who were either wholly or largely engaged on adult literacy.

Exact numbers are difficult to compute but the development from Phase II to Phase III, as known to ALRA, appears to be as follows:

	1975/76	1976/77			
	(LEA only)	LEA	ALRA	TSA	Job Creation
Coordinating staff Full-time & Part-time	379	264	195	—	—
Teaching staff FT	80	94	7	32	77
PT	3081	3315	475	260	14
Clerical FT	Not known	7	9	—	—
PT	Not known	105	140	—	—

Source: ALRA Annual Reports

The BBC project continued into Phase III largely as planned. In February and April 1976 the 'Level 2' series was piloted. It was called *Your Move* and was broadcast from October 1976. The programmes were longer than *On the Move*, 25 minutes instead of 10, and thus gave time for more concentration on direct teaching points and more opportunity for active participation by the viewer. A workbook supplemented the programmes. They were, however, broadcast at less favourable times than *On the Move*, which continued at its prime time for the first half of a second year, and at other times until October 1977.

The next step was a series of 30 five-minute radio readings, called *Next Move*. These were accompanied by a paperback text and were intended to give adults who were learning to read an opportunity of practising and developing their skills. They began transmission in March 1977.

During Phase III other contributions were made by the media. The Central Office of Information made two short public service films, known as 'fillers', in support of the campaign and these were transmitted by all fifteen stations of Independent Television. The records are not complete, but there are known to have been at least 571 transmissions of one film and 48 of the other (which, since they went out during commercial breaks, must represent many thousands of pounds-worth of advertising time). The regional ITV companies also carried a number of programmes on adult literacy, usually with a specific local reference.

Local radio, both BBC and Independent, gave much publicity and two areas in particular broadcast a local telephone number so effectively that relatively few calls came from those areas to the London number. Several of the Independent stations ran special campaigns in association with the local literacy scheme, and both BBC and Independent stations made use of radio tapes prepared by COI in 1976.

In a sense, however, these activities were, by Phase III, peripheral to the main action, which was now at local level in the building and maintenance of systems of tuition. The campaign area of Phase III was among the LEAs, and it was there that our research effort was directed.

This account of Phase III of the campaign, where initially the training schemes and the expectations of organisers and tutors laid such heavy emphasis on the simple skills of reading,

would be incomplete without reference to the minority who saw beyond that. Some of those with a background in adult education were already viewing this kind of work, at the beginning of Phase III, as a necessary element in a long-term system of continuing education, with a set of objectives that went well beyond basic literacy. Their attitude may be summed up in the words of one such organiser at this time:

> — You ask me what I consider to be success for a student. The answer is vague, and it varies from one student to the next. I've never taught anyone to spell perfectly; I don't think I ever will.
>
> The successes are often social: a student can meet and share problems with another in the same boat; a man can fill in his own job application form or read to his child; a woman may feel a lessening of the stigma and actually tell her daughter about her difficulties for the first time; a student may begin to feel less of an outcast and more an ordinary member of the population. This sort of success has something to do with independence.

Phase IV had barely begun at the time of writing. The Adult Literacy Unit which has replaced ALRA will continue the advisory and publishing services of the former Agency but will not fund local activities except for a small number of essentially innovatory special projects and voluntary schemes. The LEAs are expected to continue their literacy provision at about the same level. Account was taken of this in settling the Rate Support Grant to local authorities for 1978/79. The effects of this change lie outside the research brief.

The scope of the campaign during Phases II and III can be indicated in a number of ways.

The total numbers engaged are best estimated in the annual reports of ALRA. At the time of writing the figures for 1977/78 are not available, but by March 1977 the Agency estimated that 'well over 100,000 students have been referred locally and by the BBC since the Agency began'. (Report for 1976/77 p.15). The only reasonably firm figures however are in the consolidated returns of LEAs for specific dates in February 1976 and February 1977, namely:

	Volunteers (active)		Students (in tuition)	
	1976	**1977**	**1976**	**1977**
Counties	26,122	29,094	25,630	35,423
Metropolitan Boroughs	7,105	8,134	11,457	14,863
London Boroughs & ILEA	5,083	4,073	8,680	11,515
Voluntary Organisations [a]	3,308	3,193	3,755	3,846
	41,618	44,494	49,522	65,647

(a) The figures for 1977 include only those voluntary organisations that applied for grant in that year: some funded in 1975/76 did not reapply. Hence the totals for the two years are not directly comparable.

Source: ALRA Report 1976/77, p.16 & Appendix IV

The broadcasting effort achieved a degree of penetration that can be roughly judged from several indicators. For example, between October 1975 and January 1978 the telephone referral services handled a total of 45,712 enquiries from potential students and 19,527 offers from volunteer tutors. In a representative sample of the general population questioned by BBC Audience Research in March 1977, 82 per cent knew of the programme *On the Move* and 67 per cent claimed to have watched it. And the sales of BBC publications up to 2 September 1977 (see also Appendix 2) were, in round figures:

On the Move (student's workbook)	53,000
Your Move (student's workbook)	29,000
Adult Literacy Handbook (for tutors)	55,500
Next Move (student's reading book)	11,500
Next Move (cassette of readings)	1,300

The total cost over the three years cannot be accurately stated, since many LEAs do not budget separately for their literacy and a full costing would also have to include a proportion of the time devoted to this aspect by administrators, advisers, area principals and the like. It would not be unreasonable to assume however that the total LEA funds absorbed by the literacy scheme were at least equal to those supplied by ALRA. Then the cost of resources, tuition and organising would amount to £2 millions per year, or £6 millions for the three years; the BBC allocation of £800,000 plus the BBC local radio and the ITV and ILR output must come to a

further £1 million; and the Ford and other charitable funds add approximately £200,000. In other words, the total effort over the three years of the campaign adds up to at least £7¼ millions. And the unpaid time of thousands of volunteers is also part of the true cost.

The students' financial contribution is not wholly negligible. In 1976/77, 63 authorities made no charge for tuition and in the remainder fees could often be waived for those in need. But 40 authorities charged fees within the following range, (calculated as for a full session of 30 two-hour meetings, where an hourly rate is charged):

Under £1	2 authorities
Between £1 and £3	10 authorities
Between £3 and £7.50	12 authorities
Over £7.50	12 authorities

The highest seemed to be £13.50, and the lowest 20 pence, for the year. Four authorities claimed to charge 'according to the student's circumstances' but did not indicate at what rates. There are so many variations in local authority and voluntary organisations' financial procedures that it is not possible to state, however, what the total income from students' fees would be.

Despite these estimates of the size of the campaign and the contributions of the various partners to the successive phases as outlined in this chapter, a proper appreciation of the nature and impact of the literacy tuition demands a qualitative exploration of the direct experience of the participants. For the justification of the entire effort lies in the progress made individually by the students — and, be it said, by their tutors — towards worthy educational goals.

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CHAPTER 4
ADMINISTRATORS AND ORGANISERS

In the third year of the project visits were paid to 35 local education authorities in all parts of England and Wales to observe local developments and variations of practice and to record impressions of those responsible for staffing, finance and organisation. The selection of LEAs was again made with advice from HMI.

As indicated in Chapter 3, structures varied: accordingly we attempted in each area to see people along the whole chain of command from education office to the field. This provided three separate but overlapping viewpoints: the political and financial; the organisational or logistic; and the educational.

The political and financial viewpoint

At the outset of Phase II of the campaign, decisions about the priority to be given to adult literacy had to be taken by education committees or sub-committees and, whatever the advice of the education officer, much depended on the attitudes of elected members at a time of reorganisation and retrenchment. For example, one education officer said:

— I would describe the Council as generous; in 1974/75 they made the decision to appoint three organisers in 1975/76 and they allocated £16,000 to this end. In 1976/77 this allocation was increased to £60,000 plus £18,000 for literacy courses for tutors. The Councillors were very keen; they appointed a special subgroup to deal with any problems.

But not all councils could be as generous or afford such a special position to literacy: often it had to take its share of economy along with the rest of the public services. As one assistant education officer put it:

— The authority is fully stretched in every direction and sympathy is diminished by financial pressure.

Or another

— All financial commitments are drawn from the budget heading 'Activities organised by the LEA'. Originally this heading was granted an amount of £16,060, reduced to £10,060 in June 1976, and subsequently to £9,700, all due to the finan-

> cial cut-back made generally within the Authority. Contained in this amount were certain payments of grants and courses organised, which amount to approximately £3,700, thereby leaving a balance of £6,000 for the Adult Literacy Scheme.

Even in such circumstances, wherever the administrators could report a sympathetic attitude among elected members — even where the Mayor appeared at the Christmas party for students and volunteer tutors — the morale of the field staff was lifted.

Too often, however, the impression throughout the service was of elected members who were neutral if not actively hostile. Two quotations will illustrate this:

> — There is already a feeling [in Committee] that adult education is lavishly staffed with professionals: it hits a new service like adult literacy very hard.
>
> — If somebody had not put forward the figure of two million people [illiterates] we should not be here now . . . . No councillor is officially involved or has expressed interest in adult literacy . . . . If ALRA and the BBC had not happened, no expansion would have occurred . . . . Limited schemes would have continued to grow slowly . . . . It would have been left to professional adult educators to push it in very restrictive financial circumstances. At the moment they would have to fight very hard. The existence of adult literacy may have, in fact, helped to keep adult education as a whole alive.

This view that without the BBC and ALRA little would have happened was almost universally held. In particular the contributions of ALRA in supporting training and supplying materials in the first year, and in the assignment of staff in the second, were acknowledged everywhere. Yet, as the ALRA reports show, the sum of money received by any LEA was very small: the administrators appeared to give it a significance out of proportion to the actual amount. The reasons for this appeared to be:

a) that ALRA demonstrated a Government commitment to literacy;
b) that the ALRA fund showed that Government was not, as so often, adding to the local authorities' duties without recognising the need for finance;
c) that the ALRA grant was an assured and ear-marked allocation, secure from the moves towards economy;
d) that the ALRA grant was often perceived as dependent on

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an input of LEA money and could therefore protect the literacy budget, at least in some measure.

In one county the effect of the ALRA allocation in terms of additional staff was listed thus by the AEO, in a tone of pride:

— 1 full time tutor/organiser for the XY area.
1 part time staff tutor for XY area (210 hours per annum).
2 clerical assistants at 12½ hours per week each.
3 team leaders at 2 hours per week for 45 weeks per annum.
22 other team leaders who had their working year extended from the 25 weeks funded by the LEA to 40 weeks, the extra 2 hours per week for 15 weeks being funded by ALRA.

It will be seen that, in terms of a service for a whole county, this staffing is exiguous; yet it represented — and was viewed so in the county — a massive increase in staff for the scheme.

Only two critical perceptions of ALRA's operations were voiced, namely, that the 1975/76 terms of reference of ALRA would have been better if funds for staffing had been included then instead of audio-visual equipment; and that the restriction to literacy inhibited the development of a broader form of basic education. One officer said:

— ALRA's terms of reference cramp us. We tried to get numeracy and literacy tutors to explore together [a common core curriculum]. ALRA found that a big problem. We wanted ALRA money to present it, but ALRA said it wasn't their brief as soon as they heard the numeracy tutors were coming along.

Another policy matter was **the question of ethnic minority groups.** The original assumption of the campaign, as communicated to the research team, was that it was for 'native-speaking' adults with problems in literacy. By 1977, by far the majority of schemes were open to anyone who, in the opinion of the initial interviewer, would derive some benefit. Thus in one area we were told

— About 45 per cent of students in X are immigrants and of these 90 per cent are West Indians. The proportion of immigrants in the other schemes is smaller, but still substantial.

Some senior advisers questioned the appropriateness of accepting, in the general scheme, recent immigrants. They argued for the provision of special language tuition which would take account of the immigrant's particular language problems. By 1977, however, it appeared that either the pro-

blem of the bilingual student was being dealt with satisfactorily in the general scheme, or that special classes were being organised: it was not felt to be a general problem.

The question of ESN students proved more difficult. In one area it was dealt with by admitting one such student to a group of 6-8 other students, for it was claimed that the tutor and other students together created a supportive situation in which he could settle down and make progress. But the individual tutor faced with such a student, especially in home tuition, was often at a complete loss. Some administrators, conscious of the limited funds for their scheme, were reluctant to take on ESN students whose progress, if any, would be very slow and who would absorb teaching resources for a very long time. But not all took this view:

— I know there is a wish in the Education Department not to spend too much of our literacy budget on the ESN. I don't agree with the assumptions behind this thinking. We have found that the Special Schools were often used as 'dumping grounds' for difficult children, from which it follows that just because someone has gone to a Special School, it does not follow that he is ESN . . . . We should not neglect those who are near the bottom end of the ability range.

When the administrators referred to the **effect of the BBC** they had in mind the general effect of the campaign, and particularly the advance publicity, rather than the specific broadcasts. One officer said he was 'frightened to death' by it:

— When it started I expected hundreds from the BBC . . . . I was worried about large areas of the county where nothing was happening.

This impact, which was politically very important, was made largely by the consultations begun early in 1975 by the BBC. Under the direction of David Hargreaves, the BBC Project Head, these consultations about the form, content and nature of the broadcasts and other materials continued throughout the period with LEA and voluntary staff, and with tutors and students. Though the consultations aimed at improving the BBC service, and were universally appreciated as such, the presence of the Head of Project in the local area often improved local morale:

— David Hargreaves and Barbara Derkow came to this area and the tutors and students got an *uplift* from the feeling that they were being consulted.

Similarly the personal visits of Jenny Stevens, the liaison officer concerned with literacy, were appreciated:

— We have had an excellent service; the fact that there is a person we can identify easily in the BBC has been useful. Jenny Stevens has been particularly helpful in addressing local authorities and has done a lot of good — particularly to elected representatives.

Another perception of this effect was voiced by the AEO who said:

— If there had been no BBC effort, there would have been no expansion. If there had been the BBC without ALRA things would have been very difficult.

Some administrators took considerable steps to ensure full co-operation with various agencies. Here are two examples:

— Various agencies in the Borough, e.g.: Adult Education Centres, Libraries, Citizens' Advice Bureau, Department of Employment, Social Services Department, carry adult literacy advertisements and refer students who have made enquiries to the adult literacy office. There is close co-operation between the Adult Literacy Programme and the library services. Four libraries in the Borough have special sections for books for loan to adult literacy students and tutors, and have special loan terms for these books. Apart from the Civic Centre office and the Adult Education Centres where classes take place, use is made of the Local Teachers' Centre and one of the evening centres for training, and of Adult Education Centres and one local library for tutor group meetings. There is a Steering Committee for Adult Literacy meeting approximately once a quarter and representing senior administrative staff in adult education, remedial and secondary advisers, remedial reading teachers, adult literacy trainers and tutors, the Department of Employment, HM Borstal, the Libraries and the Social Services Department.

— In January 1975 the Education Committee agreed that the Literacy Project should be a joint Council for Voluntary Service and Local Education Authority venture with the LEA grant aiding the Project, appointing the staff and seconding them to the CVS. There is an advisory committee for Adult Literacy within the Authority composed of — Education Officer (FE), Education Adviser (Further/Adult Education), Organisers (Literacy Project), Wardens of Teacher Centres, Education Adviser (Primary), Head of Department (General Education), Representatives from College of Technology, General Secretary (CVS) and Organiser (Volunteer Bureau).

Where voluntary schemes existed, there was usually machinery for LEA cooperation with them, together with aid in cash or kind, for example with accommodation or secretarial services.

The general financial climate brought three particular consequences that had damaging effects. The first derives from the limited number of hours that the part-time local organisers were commonly paid for: two hours per week is an impossible allocation for the range of duties expected of them. Consequently a heavy burden was placed on their voluntary commitment and many administrators, in acknowledging this, were clearly unhappy about an unscrupulous exploitation of this goodwill. For example:

— Although all the 58 tutors interviewed were involved in adult literacy on a part-time basis, the involvement of some was much greater than others. A minority (18) were paid in their role as tutors who ran groups, and/or in their advisory capacity to other one-to-one tutors (tutor/group-leaders in County A, group-leaders in County B). The other 40 were unpaid, either completely as in B or only for 'expenses' at the rate of £1 a week in A.

In another area the administrators noted that they had been at first

— staggered at the extent of voluntary commitment. But now there is a hard professionalism emerging — 'I'm only paid for 4 hours, etc.,' — in the part-time paid groups.

Not all authorities paid their volunteers even for travelling expenses. Some paid a mileage allowance, often around 5.5p per mile (when the AA estimate of average cost was 10p), and the rural counties found this one of their major problems. One county, with a total travel claim averaging 10,000 miles a month, pointed out that a round trip of 40 miles for a tutor to visit a student was not unusual.

The second consequence follows from this exploitation. Inevitably clashes occurred here and there, sometimes of personality, sometimes through bureaucratic rigidity, sometimes simply from mistakes of policy. In one area a scheme was seen to be suffering particularly badly from such a clash. The origins were in personality differences but these could have been borne if limitation of funds had not made the allocation of resources between local schemes such an acerbic issue.

Moreover the matter of payment sometimes created tensions among the volunteer tutors. In County B quoted above, where expenses were not reimbursed, an advertisement for a new post of paid organiser brought protests in writing from a number of volunteers; and we refer later to a similar protest about the charging of student fees. In a service so heavily dependent on personal relationships, the effects of such clashes could be painful and damaging.

The third point relates to student fees. As already shown, many authorities offered literacy tuition free or at nominal fees. But often this applied only to one-to-one tuition at home. When a transition to groups or follow-on classes became due, the normal adult education class fee was frequently charged, which could mean moving (as in one borough) from 20p per term to £4 per term. This financial policy made unduly difficult the task of coaxing literacy students forward from home-based tuition to wider educational horizons.

A growing number of authorities have been considering making a charge for all tuition, and in some areas the administrators claimed that students had asked for this, or at least had not objected. The dilemma was that of adult education in general: most of those attending could undoubtedly afford to pay, but the population not yet reached, but thought to be most in need, would be even further deterred by raised fees.

The proposal to charge students brought protests from some volunteer tutors. The following letter was by no means the only such démarche:

> — I am in receipt of your letter giving me details of the course you propose to run. I am *alarmed* to note that you intend to charge fees for this course. I understood that if we undertook this work, it would be on a voluntary basis. I cannot, therefore, agree to run a course where a fee of any kind is involved, and I would be grateful if you could withdraw my name, unless you can assure me to the contrary that no tuition fees are involved. I should, of course, like to help with the scheme on a person-to-person basis.

The organisational viewpoint

Everyone agreed that the authority's organiser or county co-ordinator was the linch-pin of the scheme. The disposition of duties would vary according to the size of the area but the

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following description, drawn from an urban borough, is indicative of the key position of this one worker, whose main jobs were:

— to recruit, interview, train and place tutors in tuition, to maintain regular contact with students, to encourage them to continue in tuition, advise them about their learning problems and help them to achieve their goals; to maintain regular contact with tutors, advising them and encouraging them and seeing to their further development as tutors. In addition she may be responsible for administrative and financial matters as well as the provision of the physical and teaching resources of the scheme. This is an enormous job and with the beginning of the adult literacy campaign it was not uncommon to find full-time organisers working up to 80 hours a week simply in coping with the influx of new students and tutors.

At least the organiser of an LEA scheme might have the feeling that the authority, particularly the adult education service, was there to back her up. But in a voluntary organisation the same range of duties would normally fall on the unaided shoulders of one person. It will be seen how much the success of the literacy schemes depended on the devotion and personality of the organisers. Their qualities, in virtually every area visited, were impressively high.

The organisers themselves, however, felt that they were the pig-in-the-middle. Denied full resources from the authority, they had to do their best with what they had and at the same time sustain the morale of the tutors; but when things went wrong, it was the organiser who was immediately brought in to set them right. With home-based tuition it was generally impossible for them to know what was happening in time to intervene before a crisis developed, and efforts to maintain regular contact simply ate further into the hours they could allot to training, interviewing, placement and the supply of materials.

During the later stages of the research period their confidence was being undermined by uncertainty about their future. The expected cessation of ALRA grants (from which many of them were paid) and the delay in announcing any future policy left them nervous, not just about their job, but chiefly about the fate of their students. They had struggled to create viable schemes and were approaching the point at which they could see clear lines of improvement in the quality of the

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service, and they were deeply anxious about the disruption that might follow a change of funding.

On the other hand, most of them were aware that they were also approaching their limit and they were holding back on publicity because they could not cope with larger numbers. To expand further would not mean just more money (which few saw the chance of receiving anyway) but would demand a quite different mode of organisation, staffing, management, and perhaps premises.

The recruitment of volunteer tutors was effected largely by local effort once the early spate of referrals through the BBC had been absorbed. Word-of-mouth, posters in libraries and schools, local radio and newspapers were used for this purpose, the effort being intensified when the waiting-list of tutors was nearing exhaustion. There were usually waiting-lists of tutors, for by early 1976 the response from volunteers relative to the response from students was sufficient to lead to 'the media being asked to stop seeking help from the public'. However, the largest response of volunteers 'tended to come from areas where adult illiteracy was not a problem and many applicants had unfortunately to be placed on a waiting list with little chance of being used'. This remark by an organiser in a large town was confirmed by many others in geographical areas which contained distinct middle-class and working-class housing districts.

One of the ways in which organisers often dealt with this reserve was to invite everyone to join a training course as soon as possible after their application, and to use the course as a screening device, emphasising heavily the demands the work would make on them: 'if it doesn't frighten them off,' said one organiser, 'we can do something with them.' But even then, if volunteers were not used within a few weeks after training, they generally lost interest and withdrew.

Training figured largely in the organisers' perceptions, as might be expected since many of them came up through the 'training-the-trainers' courses promoted by ALRA in the first year. But they were not unaware of the shortcomings. The induction courses could not be long enough; the problem of in-service supervision and incidental training was insoluble where large numbers of home-based pairs were involved; the relation of specific literacy training to general training for teaching adults was often unclear, though in those regions where adult

education training schemes were well developed there was a feeling that 'our understanding of the training process in adult education has been one of the factors in our success'; and there were divided views about the need to train qualified school-teachers. Some — mainly those where the school remedial service had taken charge — saw no need; but a majority did not share that view. Indeed one organiser, herself the head of a special school, said:

— I have been in special education for years, but I was terrified at the prospect of facing an adult;

and another, a professional remedial teacher:

— It can be a liability to know about children. You've a lot to unlearn.

The organisers' perceptions of students were most informative, for they are the only participants in the whole campaign who have first-hand experience of students within an overall view of a scheme. They were not much interested in the routes by which students had come to them, for they knew of the multiple factors that might be involved in a decision to seek tuition. Besides the BBC referral service, local advertising and radio, word-of-mouth, the literacy symbol in libraries and shops, social service agencies, probation officers, job centres, clergy were all quoted as sources of recruitment. The relative importance of these sources is impossible to establish: indeed it was found in interviewing students that they often could not recall where they had learnt of the scheme. Some generalisations were attempted, however:

— Students referred by the BBC to 1.4.76 equal 20 out of 60 including dropouts.

— A lot of references are made through social agencies. About 1 in 20 in my area come from them. But many students mention the BBC as well; it's the seed sown.

— In the first year 1975/76, we were recruiting 3 students for every BBC referral. Now we are getting in 2 for every BBC referral. The view is that we are approaching saturation point from the resources angle. So the LEA has given less publicity to the scheme. We cannot afford more support for people with literacy problems without affecting the traditional adult education service . . . . Literacy money comes out of a reduced adult education budget.

This last point, that publicity was being deliberately reduced because schemes were at their full stretch, was repeated by organisers almost everywhere.

The character of the student applicants shifted as time went on, in the view of several organisers. Some of them expressed concern that only about one in twenty of the supposed audience (of two million in the whole country) had by then been drawn into tuition. They compared so many of the students they had, whom they referred to as 'spellers', with what they called 'real' students, meaning those with limited reading and writing. In the third year of the campaign there was a widespread view that most of those coming into the scheme were in fact 'spellers'. As one put it:

— The new majority [1976/77 intake of students] are spellers. The umbrella is widening — writing, spelling, number and general education problems. Volunteer tutors do not know how to deal with spelling problems.

And another:

— The new series of programmes has brought in quite a different student problem over the last 6 months. About 80 per cent of our students can read but have spelling and writing problems. This is a vital issue. Are we hiding the real problem behind the more acceptable 'I-can't-spell' problem? Are we now simply tackling a more superficial problem? I believe this ties in very directly with the *Your Move* programme and is something the BBC should concern itself with. This is not to deny the needs of those students — but I am sure (in only an intuitive way, of course) that the media are the cause of this shift in emphasis.

Others who shared this outlook tended to ascribe the trend to the fact that these were BBC programmes and to claim that ITV would have been more successful in recruiting the sub-literate. But few of the organisers interviewed were aware of the coverage that was given on Independent Television.

The matching of students with tutors showed another trend remarked upon by the organisers. The elaborate procedures which were enjoined upon organisers in the early days of the campaign had been rationalised by the end of 1976 into what one called 'geography and common sense'. Not only did the organisers find that they had no time for extensive interviewing and matching, but there was a feeling that the students were in

general much more robust, less shrinkingly sensitive, than had been predicted.

This may have something to do with the fact that, in some areas, as many as half of those who had telephoned for help did not turn up for an initial interview: perhaps it was only the more robust who could face that step. In the early days, organisers took endless pains to contact every referral, sometimes making three or four visits before locating the person. But the time required by that policy caused most of them to change direction and make only one such attempt. This was not a matter of insensitivity but of practicality. Moreover it was associated with a tendency to emphasise work in a centre rather than at home. Many organisers believed that a better start was made if the initial interview was at the centre, though others feared that such a policy would deter the more needy and the more shy. But here is the organiser's basic dilemma: how to ensure the maximum attention to individual need and at the same time create a system that allows for expanding numbers and raising quality.

'Drop-out' rates (including non-appearance after referral) varied so much in the organisers' perceptions as to defy generalisation. Checks were made of random samples of students who enquired through the BBC referral service. In one area, out of 13 students two finished in regular tuition; one other attended spasmodically; two came once but no more; and eight never responded to the invitation to come along. In another area, out of 26, 13 came into regular tuition without delay; one came once but no more; five could not be contacted; six attended sporadically and one declined to join. These examples, with about one-sixth and one-half of referrals being successfully incorporated into the scheme, represent the extremes of variation.

Perhaps the final comment on the organisation in which these informants were working may be left to one very experienced organiser:

— Things were done very much on the spur of the moment. We were never able to stand back. It all happened piecemeal.

The educational viewpoint

As indicated at the beginning of the chapter, the separation of viewpoints should not be regarded too rigidly. Many of the perceptions quoted above derive from educational values

rather than from a desire for organisational tidiness. Those that follow, however, relate directly to the progress of individual students.

At least five types of tuition were observed:

One-to-one (a) — one student being taught by one voluntary tutor in a private home, the student's or the tutor's.

(b) — several pairs meeting in one place, at a fixed time, but working independently.

(c) — several pairs meeting in one place, at a fixed time, under the supervision of a tutor/organiser who may take immediate decisions to exchange the tutors, to change the reading matter under consideration and so forth.

Group (a) — a class of students, usually not more than six, meeting to be taught by a single tutor.

(b) — a class of students, usually not more than ten, meeting to be taught by a paid tutor, who has at his disposal some volunteer assistants.

Some schemes offered all types; most had at least three; and a few adhered exclusively to one. Few schemes did not have some one-to-one home tuition, but the prominence given to this varied between authorities and declined over time. There was also some overlap between types, as the organiser of one fairly large undertaking explained:

— We have 200 on one-to-one at the moment and 200 on roll in the Night School classes under Mr X. 28 students have both a class place and a one-to-one tutor. These are:
(1) students in the process of changing from one-to-one to a class, or,
(2) those on shifts, alternating between the two (not a very satisfactory arrangement) or,
(3) a few who need special tuition in one particular area, for example, handwriting.

Or again:

— Progression from one-to-one to a class is made largely on the recommendation of the student's tutor. Tutors are asked,

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towards the end of the Summer term, to say whether they consider their student is ready for this form of tuition. Many of those who enrol retain their individual tutors and so receive the best of both worlds.

This type of progression was not always easy to secure, for both tutor and student were often reluctant to change. The organiser had then to exercise tactful pressure. In some areas, however, where the organiser had a regular and direct contact with students, the progression was easier.

Among many of the organisers, however, there was a clear shift of preference from home tuition to tuition at a centre in one form or another. For example, in one authority that reported 75 per cent of students in home tuition on 31 January 1975, there were only 40 per cent by March 1976. What one described as 'the hidden risks' of home tuition were being discovered: 'I don't really know what goes on in the home'. Typical attitudes by the middle of 1976 were these:

— We all start students with one-to-one tuition in a private house or a centre, but we are beginning to go towards groups, (one-to-one supervised in groups or groups of various sizes). It is very difficult to control one-to-one at home. I have not seen a single lesson in a home.

— An individualised teaching situation within a group giving an overall ratio of 4:1 has been shown to be most effective, and, therefore, in the long run the most economical way of making provision at the basic literacy level.

The value of the centre as a place for tuition depended on a number of factors. A report from one of the research team illustrates the type of atmosphere that many organisers were seeking:

— In this case, the organiser took over a refectory, modern, well-lit, with some 80 to 100 circular tables. At each table sat a one-to-one pair. A coffee bar was open during the whole of the two-hour session where tutor and student could relax in the company of other pairs. A mobile library was set up along one wall; this consisted of a series of lockable, opening shelf units. A volunteer librarian issued books, showing by example to the students how an ordinary library operated. As I entered the building, I was asked by the caretaker if he could help me.

Later, the organiser at this centre said:

— We are a team. I tell the caretaking staff, 'You are part of the

team. The bloke with problems might see you first. Make sure you welcome him. It all depends on you.'

The organisers, however, like the administrators reported some **difficulties of relationship** with their tutors and with tutor group-leaders, especially as the schemes grew and expanded. For example, one county had made three additional full-time appointments in an attempt to create a well-directed professional service; but the research team found that:

— the three new appointments brought into adult literacy an approach deriving more from adult education than the former emphasis derived from the schools, and represented something of an about-turn in county policy. Their task was not an easy one. Organisation had already developed into what was described as a federal structure, with group leaders both jealous of their independence and resentful of central initiatives. Not surprisingly they felt it was a bit late to be told how to do the job. To a lesser extent the three co-ordinators were aware of this and realised it might take some time for group leaders to accept them as co-ordinators. Even so, some resentment did occur when reports were asked for about tutors and students.

In other words, although there were more organisers as a result of ALRA, the work of organisers aimed at improving the quality of many schemes proved to be just as arduous as the essentially holding operations of 1975/76.

The organisers were deeply aware of the **emotional strain on tutors** and had always to be ready to support them where the pressure became too much. 'One tutor had an "amorous prawn" as a student: I had to go and deal with that,' said one; and another reported:

— We are short of tutors . . . from September 1975 we trained some 400 volunteers throughout the county. Only 150 remain . . . . Lots of them stopped giving help in July 1976; it was *emotionally* hard work; too much was being asked of them.

This was another of the problems that home tuition made more acute. Most of the students were men and most of the tutors women: the balance between a professional concern and an appearance of over-friendliness was often difficult to maintain, especially for tutors who had had only a few hours' training. The resulting misunderstandings, or examples of over-protectiveness and excessive dependency, were for the

organisers to sort out. Throughout all their discussions of their work, a constant theme was this perception of delicacy of human relationships that they were concerned with.

Organisers were sometimes faced with **demands from other sectors of education,** especially schools. Several instances were recorded of schools seeking the assistance of the adult literacy scheme to train parents and other volunteers for helping with school remedial work. The following is an account of one such effort:

> — One embarrassing consequence of the success of the Adult Literacy Project is that the BBC is receiving and passing on to LEAs phone calls from pupils still at school, and letters from their parents, asking for help which they cannot get in school. One way of giving help would be to abandon methods that do not work and try new ones that might. It is possible to set up one-to-one pairs in schools using parents and sixth-formers, not as teachers, but as aides, for example, to listen to pupils with reading difficulties. One school that is doing this is X High School which has adapted a redundant Caretaker's House as a Reading Centre and has a rota of parents to help . . . . Mr A. gave a course of lectures at the school similar to that which volunteer tutors attend. Over 50 parents were present. Under the careful direction of the Head of Remedial Education, they are now helping to provide individual attention for pupils who need it in years 1 to 3.

As has been pointed out already, the organisers or area co-ordinators were the only people who had contact with the actual tuition circumstances and also an overview of the whole scheme in a given area. We should not therefore have been as surprised as we were to find that they were the only respondents in our research who were able to express general opinions about the special publications of ALRA and the BBC, and about the broadcasts. We shall report later on the limited awareness of these resources that we found among volunteer tutors and students, who appeared to be intent on their own teaching and learning to the almost complete exclusion of other aspects of the campaign. Because of the influence of the organisers, however, the perceptions we report here must be taken as infusing in a general way the whole of local schemes.

The BBC and ALRA publications provide a good example. At the opening of Phase II, the organisers were uncomfortably aware of the slender materials available for them to pass on to

their tutors. Even those who at first relied heavily on children's reading schemes became more sensitive to their limitations under the influence of ALRA training courses and publications. Accordingly, the materials published for the campaign were gratefully received by organisers everywhere, especially as these came out at what was for the organisers the eleventh hour. The BBC *Adult Literacy Handbook*, written to accompany the radio series for tutors, was brought out in May 1975 so that it could be used in training courses during the summer. In June 1975 the ALRA *Trainers' Kit* appeared, in October the BBC students' workbook for *On the Move* and in November the ALRA *Resource Pack for Volunteer Tutors*. This was the period when the most desperate attempts were being made to plan and establish training courses in preparation for the expected flood of students. These publications, available in bulk and (in the case of ALRA) cheaply or sometimes free, gave the hard-pressed trainers a basis of material to work with, and even when interviewed two years later many of the organisers recalled their gratitude at the time. The following extracts from their replies, arranged in chronological sequence of publication, show that fact quite clearly; but they also indicate some of the contrary views expressed.

(a) BBC Adult Literacy Handbook

— We issued it to all our tutors. It is used as a reference book.
— It has been 'the Bible' in our area — very widely used, a superb source book.
— The most valuable book we have at all, mainly as a reference book.
— We passed it round, but no comment from tutors.

(b) ALRA Trainers' Kit

— Marvellous! We still use it in training sessions. It saved my bacon!
— We used the ALRA Kit which came out just before training started. There was not much else to use.

Many similar comments were recorded, such as 'well used', 'very good'; but there were others who said

—It was used selectively. Initially it was valuable; and parts are still valuable.
— The ALRA Kit was the least useful. We had already started when it arrived.

— We used it in some training sessions; but tutors have found it confusing and not terribly useful. It came out too late.

(c) BBC STUDENTS' *WORKBOOK for On the Move*

— One of the best sellers at the beginning. Tutors found it useful. *(This comment was repeated many times)*
— All students were shown the book at their first interview. A number use it, but it's not very popular. I've stopped using it now.
— We tend not to use it. We had the first ten lessons duplicated, but it was only relevant for a few, the minority who started at rock bottom.
— We started to use it but the students got on more quickly than did the programmes. We used it at first to give confidence to those who watched *On the Move*.
— It's not used now. We prefer locally produced material. The tutors produce their own materials and in training courses there is great emphasis put on the need for this.

That last comment will be found to be echoed by a great majority of the tutors and students interviewed.

(d) ALRA RESOURCE PACK FOR VOLUNTEER TUTORS

There were very many tributes to this: 'First rate,' they said; 'Very useful'; 'Very, very popular — I can't have enough of them. Items are always being used.'

— Very useful. It's something that one can offer them. This Kit does provide a support they need, particularly after some experience with a student, when it's a source of new ideas.
— Used a lot. Volunteers find it helpful and many have bought their own.

(e) BBC SECOND STUDENTS' WORKBOOK, for *Your Move*

Again there were appreciative comments, but fewer of the schemes had used this book at all. As comparisons could now be made with the first workbook, the comments tended to appear in comparative form:

— The *Your Move* workbook was used more widely and was more effective . . . especially in classes.
— Both *On the Move* and *Your Move* workbooks were used. But students didn't like either of them. The *On the Move* book was at too low a level and students felt insulted.
— Many of the students found the books too expensive, especially the unemployed. The BBC books were largely used because it

was the OK-thing. But many have turned from them as other materials have become available.

The published materials were thus influential in starting people off and were thereafter used as reference or source books. But it is a measure of the difference between the expected and the actual level of students that these materials did not represent, either singly or collectively, a usable programme of work. As the campaign progressed, emphasis in training fell more and more on home-made materials, which helps to explain why so few comments about the published materials are recorded from tutors.

What the BBC and ALRA publications did, however, was to present general guidelines along which schemes could develop in their own ways, and they notably did not impose set patterns. Had they been available earlier, as some of the organisers wished, they might have had a more formative influence — but at the expense of much flexibility and individual enterprise.

The BBC Broadcasts were commented on frequently by the organisers interviewed, but usually for their importance in the furtherance of the campaign as a whole rather than in connection with the local tuition. We have already spoken of the weight placed by administrators on the effect of the BBC Project upon the public mind and the generating of action by LEAs. Organisers held the same view, though with more emphasis on the effectiveness of broadcasting as a recruiting medium.

It is necessary to speak in these terms about broadcasting in general, for many of the comments were unspecific. People were aware of something having been 'on the radio' or 'on television' without being able to identify the programme or the channel. Few specific references were made, for instance, to Independent Television, except to say that that was where the programmes should have been located; yet we know that much incidental coverage was in fact given by the ITV companies.

Moreover, we found little evidence to suggest that organisers — and even less that tutors — had set out to follow any of the broadcast series with any regularity. Their observations about individual programmes must be read with that in mind: they are generalised impressions, often with a strong component of second-hand evidence; they are not critically thought-out

evaluations. From the tone of voice in which questions about the broadcasting were answered it was evident that the organisers had never had the broadcasts in the centre of their attention: this was a marginal feature for them.

Nevertheless, these are the perceptions of an important and influential body of people in the campaign; again they are presented in chronological order of the first transmissions:—

(a) ON THE MOVE (TELEVISION)

— Excellent — alerted people with a problem to the fact that help could be available. As a teaching instrument it was not used much, that is regularly. You see, there were only a small percentage of students at the lower end of ability.
— *On the Move?* Sound publicity, but its greatest limitation is that people in general now associate adult education with illiteracy.
— Many volunteer tutors watch. I'm surprised at how many students watch even when they're above that ability level. It probably has a reinforcement effect.
— Good publicity, but not very useful for teaching the people *we* know about. There is a general feeling that it's helping children in primary schools. But I like the timing of the programme on Sunday evenings.
— The element of teaching is too limited. Very few students watch — about one out of ten watches fairly regularly. It's too bitty, the lively manner makes it trivial.
— Many tutors have watched it with their children. We invested in a video-tape of the programmes but after a very short period of time we stopped using it as a teaching resource. We saw it as a means of persuading members of the public to come out and declare themselves.

(b) TEACHING ADULTS TO READ (RADIO)

There was no evidence at all from the organisers that tutors had listened systematically to these broadcasts. The comments about the programmes derived entirely from those who had recorded them and used the tapes in training.

— Very valuable. We used it on tape for training courses for tutors and also lent it to a tutor who had missed a training session.
— We found the radio programmes valuable, especially as tape-recordings for training tutors. However, we edited a considerable proportion ourselves.
— We recorded the radio programmes for tutors, but it wasn't taken up. I think there was just too much coming from the BBC at that time.

— We copied and duplicated the programmes on tapes. They were on loan for volunteer tutors and many of them have borrowed them.
— They were good on the whole. Seventy-five per cent of tutors listened to tapes of the programmes. I used the tapes for tutors who were beginners as it helps to give them confidence.
— I only heard four programmes. Many tutors didn't even know it was on. However, a tape-record was made for those who wished to listen. Some of our tutors couldn't understand the interviews selected because of the dialects. I think the time of the broadcasts was also one reason for not listening, as well as the fact that the publicity for the radio was poor.

(c) YOUR MOVE (TELEVISION)

There was even greater variation in the comments about this programme than there had been about *On the Move*.

— There is some evidence that volunteer tutors and students are attempting to watch.

That was said in a hesitant tone. The research team found little such evidence in the areas studied in depth.

— More students watch it than *On the Move*. There's value in the teaching content and students want to follow it up in class.
— *Your Move* should have started earlier. Students lost interest after one year of *On the Move*. They like *Your Move*, but physically they cannot see it regularly.
— The timing of the broadcasts is all wrong. But it's been videotaped and used with groups.

Experience in most areas, however, suggested that videotaping was not the answer:

— I offered a television recording of *Your Move*. In the first week all couples attended the viewing. In the second week less attended. In the third week only one or two pairs attended, so I stopped offering the facility. They [the tutors] preferred to get on with it with their students.
— I started getting students to watch but they gave up because of the difficulty of following up the programmes in their class meetings. There was a lack of homogeneity of level. I personally liked *Your Move* for presentation and content but students do not watch it much. If they saw a programme below their level, they tend never to watch again. Tutors like *Your Move* but they cannot watch regularly.

In terms of publicity for the campaign and of recruitment of both tutors and students, there were many tributes to the value

of the media. This applied particularly to local radio in certain areas (though by no means all: there were complaints that some stations were school-dominated in their educational output). It applied occasionally to Independent Television, but more generally to popular national programmes such as *Panorama*, *Woman's Hour*, and the *Jimmy Young Show*.

On the Move, which extended over a whole year and at peak times, ran twice during the research period. Not only was there more comment about it therefore than about the other programmes; also it tended to be thought of as the archetype of the BBC Project, and the differences between it and *Your Move* or *Next Move* were neither analysed in people's minds nor exploited in training and tuition.

The following summary points, though proffered as relating to the broadcast elements in general, are inevitably coloured by the more common knowledge of *On the Move*.

First, there was frequent reference to the programmes' popular style. Some objected to this as trivialising, but more were agreeably impressed by the lack of stuffiness, by the variety of matter and manner (which the objectors dismissed as 'bitty') and by the skilful use of animation and music. One frequently mentioned effect of this style was its appeal to children, which may have made it easier to potential students to watch without embarrassment in the presence of their families.

Secondly, although the greater teaching element of *Your Move* was sometimes noted, there was no evidence of attempts to integrate the television programmes with the tuition, except by the video-taping that has been quoted. The use of the broadcasts as source material, as the Handbook was used, seems to have occurred to virtually none of the organisers, even though BBC and ALRA Newsletters carried an article on one teacher's imaginative and successful attempt at this.

The overwhelming view therefore was that the broadcasts had performed excellently as a recruiting agent and as an influence on public opinion, but had rarely entered in any significant way into the day-to-day process of learning. It needs to be added, however, that the research could not investigate the isolated home-learner: we have no means of knowing how many, if any, adult subliterates watched the programmes on their own and worked privately through the accompanying books.

The administrators and organisers whose perceptions are summarised in this chapter were the architects of their local schemes. To a very large extent the boundaries within which the tutors and students operated were set by those perceptions and it will now be apparent that there was a good deal of variation from place to place. To some extent these variations were the result of considered policy: the need to submit schemes to ALRA for grant encouraged that. Largely, however, they were conditioned by local circumstances of finance and staffing, by the urgency of the need to set a scheme of some sort going in time, and by successive adjustments as the work developed from week to week. It would be a mistake to think of any local scheme as having a fixed form and pattern, for every one evolved over time.

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CHAPTER 5
THE TUTORS

Now we turn to the tutors, who proved to be key people, not only in the sense that it was they who gave the tuition, but in the research too. There was no way of meeting students for research interviews except through the tutors. Sometimes the tutor objected altogether, sometimes insisted on being present throughout the interview. But in all cases it was clear that the student's perception of the whole process of literacy, including our research objectives, was coloured by his tutor's perceptions. These perceptions are presented in this chapter and they form a set of perspectives.

As already indicated, virtually all the home-based tutors were unpaid volunteers. In group tuition there were also unpaid volunteers giving individual attention. The tutors supervising groups, or taking classes, were normally paid an hourly rate for their work, or perhaps for part of it. Some were engaged in more than one mode of tuition, and others had proceeded from one form to another. The unpaid volunteers greatly outnumbered the paid teachers and their comments therefore predominate in this chapter. But where matters of teaching method or materials are treated, the experiences of both paid and unpaid tutors are included together. The chapter is concerned with the perceptions of those giving the tuition, whatever its form, as distinct from those organising, supervising or training.

Who were the tutors? Matching of student and tutor, so solemnly treated in the early stages, came later to depend simply on 'geography and common sense'. It also depended, of course, on the kind of people available as tutors, and while there were variations between areas, there were some common features. Between 80 and 90 per cent of volunteers were women, a high proportion of them young, and almost all with a good educational background. In the first stages very many were, or had been, primary-school teachers who saw the invitation to volunteer as a direct appeal to their professional experience. By 1976, one third to one half of the volunteers were graduates or trained teachers. Similar proportions were to be found in voluntary schemes, though there it was usually the case that the organiser or prime mover of the scheme had

been a remedial teacher. Indeed the teaching profession can be justifiably proud of its contribution to the adult literacy campaign.

There was not complete homogeneity, however. Although only a small proportion of the total, there was a noticeable contribution from young men in technical occupations, in journalism and in commercial professions; and a similar group of homely matrons who would lay no claim to educational sophistication but who had brought up children and grandchildren. What cannot be assessed is the selective effect of the initial training and how many volunteers with less confidence in their own education withdrew when the nature of the task was made clear.

Recruiting of volunteers in certain schemes was initially through school notice boards, and there more volunteers were practising teachers. However, volunteers learned of the literacy schemes from many sources — broadcasts, the Workers' Educational Association, Church groups, the local press were all mentioned — or from friends who were already tutors. Sometimes more than one source of information was quoted but the local press seemed to be the most influential, especially in articles about the BBC's plans; and the announcement that two million people needed help seemed to have stirred many people into offering their services.

Reasons for volunteering were twofold, namely a wish to help others to become literate, and a desire for a personal interest outside the home. The two motives often ran together. The following are typical responses to a question about what it was that had attracted them in the first instance:

— (Long pause) I don't know really. I hadn't worked it out. It is just that I think more people ought to read. I suppose because I like it so much, I am sure they would too.

— I think it's terrible if you can't read.

— I honestly did not realise that there were so many people who had this literacy problem. I was amazed. I thought if I could help in any way — in my own sort of little way — I was quite prepared to do so.

— I thought this is something I could probably do and, in a sense, was interested in. I had got over my first year of teaching — I had a certain amount of free time — I thought I would find out more.

— Just thought I might offer my services and help somebody — I've got no sort of fancy reasons.

— Simply, that I was interested. Plus, as I have already told you, the need to find a project. It just struck me as a coincidence — to kill two birds with one stone I suppose.

But sometimes tutors thought that literacy skills would result in other benefits besides being able to read or write:

— I do it because I hope it will be able to make *him* change *his* society or change the way he lives for himself. I do not want it to come from me. But he can't do it unless he can read.

Tutors' perceptions of their roles changed with experience. In the early period of 1975/76 the majority, especially those without teaching experience, perceived their task in specific terms of teaching people to read and write and they tended to regard literacy as the most important of all skills:

— I knew people had problems but not how vast it was: how many there were. I thought how important reading is and how difficult it must be for people who can't read. It must be terrible not to be able to read a signpost. I thought it would be nice to help people to do that, and to be able to help them do their job better.

— I think that being able to read is a very important thing . . . I mean, they can't be able to sort of criticise society and what is happening unless they can read.

This they felt would be well within their capabilities, for most of them expected their students to be total beginners:

— I knew darn well I could teach anybody to read.

— It is not that you need to be terribly well educated to teach someone to read. It is just that education gives you the confidence to feel that you could. And that is the deciding factor.

— With the student I have at the literacy centre [the problem] is clea'. He just cannot do anything and you think 'Oh! that's all right, I know where to start there.'

For many however this confidence was related to a clear distinction in their minds between teaching — a professional task with broad aims — and helping someone to read:

— I did not do it with any idea that . . . you know, how can I say it? . . . that I was a teacher . . . I feel that I am not a teacher.

— I said to him after the first couple of lessons, 'You know, I cannot teach you much because I am not a teacher and, really, you need more than I can give you.' But, as I say, he is a very pleasant fellow and I just hope I have been able to give him some help . . . .

After some experience, the same tutor made a remark which encapsulates the feelings of the vast majority of tutors, namely that they discovered their role to be that of a partner in a shared learning experience:

— I have learned an awful lot since I have been teaching them — or helping them, not teaching.

Experience of the work led to much more fundamental changes in the tutors' perceptions of their role. Generally, not more than a quarter or a third of the students were really poor readers and even for them the task was quite different from teaching a young child. Tutors learned with something of a shock that students were capable of operating intelligently in quite demanding occupations without the ability to read, and the essential equality of students and tutors in adult learning situations was forced upon their notice.

For a majority of students the goal was something other than the acquisition of simple literacy skills, and the tutors' perceptions of these demands were graphically described:

— He is a very good reader. There are few problems there. I mean, when he first came to me, I for a long time wondered what his problems were. And I went to a tutors' meeting — and we had quite a few people there who had got the same problem.

— The student comes in and you ask them to read something. They read it. And you ask them to write something and they write it. And you think 'Good God! What is he here for?' You know, that is the worst. As I say, — and a lot of tutors have found this — there is no sort of pattern. You cannot say 'He is deficient in this. He is deficient in that.' There are just sorts of pockets of deficiency, if you want to call it that.

There were wider deficiencies too, mentioned normally in the context of the tutor's fear of being drawn into the role of counsellor or social worker:

— He wanted me to do everything for him. He wanted me to find him a girlfriend, a new job, which I couldn't really do. He joined a club which I helped with. He tended to blame everything — he had poor eyesight, went to a backward school — on that.

> Everything that went wrong it was this, that and the other. He wasn't prepared to do anything about it. Quite honestly I wasn't interested after 8 months when he was still harping back on this, that and the other. He wanted me to snap my fingers and everything would be done for him.

And another:

— The problems he has got because of it are enormous. He has tried to commit suicide twice because of it. I have taken on a tremendous lot. It is fantastic the things he gets up to to hide it. How he has managed to build up his business I don't know. He has done it by being aggressive. He has got himself a reputation for not being tolerant — but it is only because he is so scared that somebody will ask him to write something down.

But some tutors were able to set bounds to the demands of this kind and confine themselves to giving friendly advice or building confidence:

— We are told to turn away from situations like that but, sometimes, it is better to discuss them. I try to do it without saying, 'I should do this or do that.' She has asked me where she should go for advice. I will tell her that.

— It is so obvious that some of them lack self-confidence and that you [should] respond to their immediate need which is more important than not being able to spell. Make them realise that it is not the end of the world that they can't spell every word, that I couldn't care less. I am only there because they want to do it.

Thus it is clear that the volunteer tutors were faced with a population of students whose needs were individual and heterogeneous, not at all conforming to the picture of the adult illiterate that the advance publicity had projected. How well did the volunteers feel they had been prepared for this experience?

Training was referred to by many of the tutors and we shall return later to an analysis of their perceptions of its adequacy. In 1975, however, the problem facing authorities was to set up any sort of training scheme, for few of them had adequate numbers of experienced staff, especially to prepare for the flood of volunteers that was expected. With ALRA support therefore 'training-the-trainers' courses were set up, using what resources of staff there were in the remedial service, in adult and community education or in the youth service.

The problems are well illustrated by the replies to a pre-course questionnaire completed by participants in one such training-the-trainers course in June 1975. Out of 28 respondents:

15 had taught illiterates on a one-to-one basis.
8 had taught them in class groups.
5 had a diploma in the teaching of reading (to children).
24 had taught adults either formally or informally, 6 of them remedially in mental hospitals, etc.
6 knew of a broad range of reading schemes available in their Authority (e.g. *Pirate, Racing to Read, SRA, Royal Road, Ladybird).*
13 had views about diagnostic tests (ranging from 'unnecessary' to 'essential').
8 had experience of adapting a scheme for adults or of writing their own material.

The variation of experience revealed here makes a very limited resource for a training scheme, and it was characteristic of many authorities at this time. It is not surprising that these respondents, when asked what areas they felt the course should mainly deal with to prepare them for training volunteer tutors, placed *Designing a course for tutors* and *Designing a learning programme for adult illiterates* at the head of their lists, with *Locating and selecting suitable materials* next.

Training courses for volunteer tutors began in the late summer of 1975. Partly because of the limited number of trainers, partly because it was felt that volunteers would not accept long periods of training, the courses were short, mainly about six sessions of two hours, and had to concentrate on what were regarded as the essentials. The volunteers themselves wanted specific guidance on teaching methods and materials, and workshop sessions about these matters figured in most courses. Attention was also given to adult learning and to the personal relationship involved, but these had little reality for the volunteers until they had met and worked with a student for a little while. On the other hand, where visits were paid to classes or to centres with one-to-one tuition in groups, these were found very valuable; as also was the contribution that was often made by a local librarian. It is worth noting that excellent local handbooks were produced in a number of areas and these frequently incorporated materials from central sources such as ALRA Newsletters or other publications. This was an effective

way of disseminating such material, but it meant that some of the volunteers we interviewed had been using the material without knowing its origin.

How did the tutors feel about their training? The universal first reply was of gratitude.

— I really would not have known where to start without guidance. . . . They were really practical ideas that she was able to give us. I did not know what a flash card was, for example.

— I think tips on how to approach the pupil. I cannot remember specific things but I felt enough confidence after the course that I could offer a little something that I could not have if I had not done the course.

However, there were inevitable reservations, especially from those for whom it was all a quite new experience:

— I'm glad they gave me some training but it was just three mornings and you cannot really take it all in. You've not met your student when you do the training. You don't know anything about him. I think it helps when you actually meet them.

— I think what would have been useful would have been a revision course after the first few weeks which particularly focussed on the sort of problems I was faced with, rather than all the problems of all non-readers, from the very basic to the people who can read and can't spell.

Moreover the fact that the courses had to aim at general applicability left many of the volunteers with a feeling of being unprepared for the specific needs of the student they eventually met:

— She needed help with her spelling and grammar. Well, I couldn't help her very much because the course I had done had been just basic, telling you about ways of teaching people to read, not actually about spelling and grammar.

And:

— The training I had here was one day. . . . The morning was spent in talking about why people might be illiterate and the afternoon about the various ways of teaching literacy — like phonics and so on. In a way, you see, those things were just too advanced.

Indeed, it seems that most tutors looked to their training course simply as a means of picking up techniques for teaching

reading and writing. Perhaps this was inevitable when tutors started a course without ever having met a student. That part of the course concerned with human relationships was often thought to be rather vague:

— I found it too negative. There were not enough concrete suggestions about what should be done. I left it unsure of whether I would be able to do it, had little idea of what I should do, and felt maybe I am not very good.

There were others who felt that there was not enough information on how to teach and that the reality of the learning situation had not been established:

— Towards the end of the course, I spent two hours at an on-going class. If I could have spent the first of the six weeks at that class, the rest of the course would have increased its value enormously.

An intriguing feature of the tutors' comments about their training was the frequency of their criticism of others on the course, particularly the do-goody, superior attitude of some:

— People haven't got over it. I thought they might. We all went on the same course. And if there are certain people who can go through and still be like that, what we were being taught on the course still hasn't got through. Depending on the sort of person you are, you have either got an awareness or you haven't. I don't think you are going to be taught it so I think it [the course] should have far more to do with practical aids to help you. Either that person is going to be good at it, to be sensitive, or they are not.

However, the effect of training on individual volunteers was not always to bolster their confidence:

— They rather threw science at the training course . . . . At the end of the course everybody was worried about taking a pupil . . . . They were frightened. But at the beginning they were full of confidence.

Or:

— About 6 or 7 (out of 20) said, having done the course, they just didn't feel they could ever manage it and they never did have students after they'd been on the course. They just hadn't realised when they volunteered what they might be letting themselves in for, I think.

Or, a fairly widespread reaction:

— Quite frankly, it frightened me when I came away and thought, 'There's all those ladies who are teachers. They all seemed to understand what it's all about and I've not got a blooming clue.'

Yet the more usual reaction was to return, even after some discouragement in the early training sessions, to the confidence of the first offer of help:

— There were quite a few teachers on the course. It bothered me then but it doesn't now. I thought they must know more. But often the techniques [they know] don't seem to work.

Or:

— A lot of it, I realise now, I will not be able to use for a long time now, but at least I know what there is available.

This transition was helped where the tutors felt that the course had established a close relationship with the area organiser, who could always be telephoned or visited to talk over problems. To some extent too the success of a training course could be evaluated by the subsequent willingness of tutors to attend monthly meetings. Attendance at these meetings varied considerably from area to area and depended on many factors, not least of which was ease of travel. The impression is that usually not more than one third of the active tutors attended such meetings and they were the keener ones who were perhaps less in need of such continuing support.

Persistence rates among volunteer tutors are very difficult to assess. In some areas, as many as 50 per cent of volunteers proceeded no further than a first interview. Training courses were often used as a selection device by which the weakly motivated and unapt were persuaded to withdraw, up to as many as 30 per cent in some areas. This was more true of 1976/77, when there was a reservoir of trained tutors awaiting placement, than in 1975/76 when virtually everyone was accepted for training.

Most local authority returns tended to overestimate the number of active tutors, simply because of the difficulty of keeping track of home-based pairs. Where they were not meeting at a given moment — perhaps because the student was on holiday or ill or just taking a break — tutors still regarded themselves as committed to that student and thus not available

to take on another. From random checks by the research team it would appear that by 1976/77 out of 100 initial volunteers, some 50-60 could be expected in training courses and 35-40 of them to take up teaching.

The tutors' persistence was also affected by their personal circumstances, holidays and family commitments, and the natural breaks of the educational year: the end of term, where it was made to apply, often brought a few withdrawals. The unpredictability is shown by the following record of known withdrawals from one medium-sized scheme:

Number of tutors who withdrew

Jan 1976	— 6	Jan 1977	— 4
Feb 1976	— 5	Feb 1977	— 10
March 1976	— 8	March 1977	— 11
April 1976	— 6	April 1977	— 7
May 1976	— 4	May 1977	— 17
June 1976	— 12	June 1977	— 6

But these persistence rates need to be placed in the context of the organic growth of various schemes. First, as schemes developed, the need for one-to-one tutors, either at home or in centres, became less evident. As students moved into groups the number of tutors required declined. Secondly, in areas where there was an oversupply of tutors, many felt that having done one stint they would like a break. The tutor who was then, so to speak, on leave could be replaced by another tutor in reserve. Thirdly, dealing as they were with students who brought with them a record of failure, many of whom had achieved wonders for themselves by even coming forward for tuition, the tutors often found the emotional pressure considerable. If the student gained little more than a new sense of confidence, that was a minor success, but it was difficult for many tutors to see it so and they tended to give up with a feeling of disappointment. Fourthly, there were tutors who announced that tuition had terminated, but on closer questioning revealed that they continued to maintain contact with their students as friends: tuition had not ceased, it had become more subtle; but the figures would record the withdrawal of a tutor.

The variations of relationships in paired tuition are shown by the following transcript. It is taken from the log of an

organiser in one of the research areas, and relates to 30 pairs in his scheme:
(S = student; T = tutor; O = organiser):

1. Visit to S. — T wants to give up tutoring because of other commitments but will continue until O finds S another tutor.
2. Progressing well. Both attended Contact Group 1.6.77. Steady working partnership.
3. Regular meetings, but S progress fluctuates. Home problems abound — just restarting work.
4. Irregular meetings — student's erratic life. Pairing not yet settled.
5. T has just stopped lessons because of domestic and professional commitments. S wants new tutor — just beginning to blossom! Happy about change.
6. S no longer attends classes. Before dropping out, amount of work depended on S mood — left because of fees and loss of interest.
7. Steady and happy pair. S's reading now very good — most work on spelling. Toying with the idea of classes but wife ill so no change yet.
8. S has made almost as much progress as he is likely to — but has to wait. T has decreasing time available.
9. Regular meetings despite S illness and mother. Need for confidence building.
10. Happy pair and reasonable progress given the material. S has blossomed socially — library and sick visiting. Need to restrain T from giving S too much help.
11. Hilarious lessons. Progress good but dependent on S's mood.
12. Steady progress. S tried class but not happy there — loyalty keeps him working with T.
13. Satisfactory but some difficulty in working at student's home. Some problems with materials.
14. Tutor about to withdraw for work reasons. T thinks S should join a class in September. No personal contact with student.

15. Matching broke down shortly after first session. S finding it too much with family commitments and new pregnancy.
16. S enjoying lessons and making progress in supportive home environment.
17. Have not met for a lesson for almost a year. Regard as totally broken down and suggest re-matching of tutor.
18. Broken down as a result of students' aggressive and eccentric behaviour (I would support the tutor in this view). Regard student as withdrawn; tutor is making up her mind whether to continue in the scheme.
19. Student withdrew early May — "taking up too much time" — does not wish to be rematched. Tutor currently considering whether to have another student.
20. Regular meetings. S doing well and gradually overcoming acute embarrassment over new difficulties.
21. This one is on its way out, I think. Tutor believes student psychologically unable to learn but work I have done with S doesn't bear this out.
22. Broken down. S doesn't want re-match — he says he finds it too upsetting. T to be rematched.
23. Regular contact with tutor. Student has had some difficulty with 'learning plateaux' but he has tackled them sensibly. Has taken a long time to establish relaxed relationship, largely due to student's withdrawn personality.
24. Progress and relations OK. Student's attendance somewhat irregular. I've not seen him yet.
25. Broken down (I think) due to tutor's illness.
26. Very recent matching in which I'm not entirely confident — will watch closely.
27. S feels progress slow but satisfactory, more confident now. Tutor also helps with Maths.
28. Temporary breakdown. Contacted student by phone who said he'd resume lessons. However, hasn't — will visit later.
29. Irregular meeting due to S moving house and losing baby. Now sees S once a fortnight. Progress satisfactory. Presently working on Highway Code as S has bought a car.

30. T contacted at tutor group. Regular meetings with student. Progress slow, difficulty with retention. Will visit student.

It would be fruitless to attempt to categorise this adventitious sample of pairs. However it does make clear not only the fragility of the relationship in many cases and the demands on the tutor's persistence, but also the evident successes. Any generalisations about 'drop-out' of tutors need to be judged against this backcloth of human endeavour and human problems. So also do the tutors' perceptions of their role and their estimates of their training.

How then did the tutors see their students and their progress? The first meeting with the student was for the tutor essentially a diagnostic occasion, though standard diagnostic tests were hardly ever used, especially in the first year. It was a common-sense assessment: could he sign his name or read a bit of a newspaper?

— I had no professional assessment of how far he had progressed when he first came to me . . . . It was practically nil . . . . He could write his name.

And:

— I did not understand at the beginning how below standard he was . . . . I'm not interested in testing people and things like that, but some way of diagnosing — that would have been useful.

The tutor usually accepted the student's adult right to specify his needs or interests and would begin to teach him to write something or read something which bore upon them:

— She wanted to make shopping lists for herself. She wanted to be able to read recipes and read children's books; so it gave me a lot of material to work with, which was good.

Having found the student's interests, and perhaps his deficiencies in literacy, the tutor would generally begin, with the agreement of the student, to find relevant resource materials such as mail-order catalogues or football team annuals, as the training courses advised:

— He could read all the names of football teams. So I have based practically every lesson since around this. There is quite a variety in the football teams.

Tutors were impressively assiduous and inventive in preparing

materials. They made up word-lists to expand vocabulary or practise digraph and word patterns; they constructed flash cards, they went off to teachers' centres where machines would layer plastic on their picture cards to make them more durable; they devised word games. After much experiment one tutor said:

— We have recently finished one of the Ladybird books on 'Mountain Adventure', . . . and it turned out that he is an expert on rock climbing. Well, this had never come up before. He had never mentioned it.

The tutors had to be pragmatists, but sometimes their usual method of suggest - and - hope - for - a - response met with little reaction:

— Whereas kids are all go and you get a lot from them, I don't from him. He's like he's dried up. I never hear him say 'I want to read this bit and write this'. It just would not happen. I say 'Do you want to do that?' He says, 'I'm quite happy to do what you want'. This is quite different from kids. Their experiences are limited compared to his. They use them a lot more. You are able to because they are always overflowing.

— I get the impression that he tends to think that we are doing this because I like it. He never gives any indication of wanting to do anything specifically. Always the answer is, 'Well, if you would like to'.

Indeed, tutors often expressed surprise that their students were not more regular in their attendance, or keener to do regular homework; and disillusionment sometimes appeared:

— When I said to her later on 'Have you been looking at the various things and trying to learn them?', she said, 'I have not had time, we were in a hurry'. So I just shrugged and said 'That isn't going to do you any good, is it?' It makes me cross. If you want to do something you've got to blooming well get down to it. You can't expect the skies to open, the Lord to appear and strike you and it is there.

— That is the thing I had a bit of a shock over. My student is not really motivated to learn greatly. This was plugged at the [training] course, that they have made the big step, they will be really keen to learn.

But there are many more testimonies to the satisfaction of

the personal relationship that was developing between tutor and student. For example, in answer to a question about the most rewarding aspect of the work, one tutor replied eagerly:

— Oh, the relationship I've built up with my student. I have regarded it all the time not as a teacher-pupil relationship but as, I suppose, a counselling relationship. We are two friends who learn from one another because I've learned a lot from my student as well . . . I've learnt a lot about life in this area from someone who's always lived there. Just oddments of information. I've learnt a lot from him.

Or again:

— I haven't really had any real problems, I think. We work on a very informal basis. I don't use much real teaching material. On the whole we follow lines that come up mainly from him, from his experience. He quite often writes a piece for me — a story or something about himself which we then work on, because he is a fairly competent reader. It is his spelling and his use of language, written language, that's his real problem.

— We have no trouble finding material and we've had no heavy silences — it's all very informal — . . . I think he and I both know that he's progressed and he's enjoying reading more than he was.

Even where progress is being made, however, the self-doubts of the tutor are liable to recur. For there are few bench-marks by which progress can be objectively measured, and the temptation to reach for a standardised test becomes strong at times. For example:

— Sometimes I come home and feel depressed and think I'm wasting my time going over to S. Another time, they have said 'Jolly good, this week. I read a book the whole way through for the first time'. You think, 'I've done something'. It varies from week to week. Sometimes I think it was absolutely a waste of time and people's money.

— I think, am I doing the right thing, is it working all right? Should I be doing something else? But after she had gone I thought, looking over what we had done over the six months, there is an improvement but sometimes it is slower than other times. I wouldn't say I had my doubts but I do get a little . . . should I do something more? Are there loopholes I haven't covered?

— I'd like some sort of exercises. I feel I'm going along but I don't know if I'm going along in the right direction. It is very difficult

to tell how she is progressing. It is a very slow thing. She does forget very easily. You do have to repeat and repeat. It might stick. I think she's progressing a bit but it's hard to tell. Perhaps if I had some sort of guidance bookwise I might be able to judge better if she is progressing. On the other hand, maybe it's more flexible to use everyday things like magazines. I'm not sure if I'm going the right way about it.

The isolation of the home-based pair accentuates these feelings. Tutors who can telephone their organiser frequently, or who are in contact with other tutors, gain much of this needed reassurance, as the following extract shows; yet in many areas fewer than half the tutors took advantage of the meetings that were arranged:

— I wanted to go to one [i.e. tutor group meeting]. I was beginning to feel a little bit alone. Wondering if I was on the right lines. Wanting to discuss it with someone else. If you're not a professional teacher you think, 'Oh gosh, am I going about it the right way'. Tend to lose a bit of your self-confidence. Very pleased I did go. Funnily enough, it's more each tutor talking to the other tutors, explaining their problems, trying to help one another. The one I went to, the organiser was there. I thought she would be sitting there telling us all what to do. Saying, 'Oh, you've got such-and-such a problem, this is the answer to it'. She just let us say what our problems were and threw it out and said, 'Is there anybody who has got an answer to that?'

But isolation of a different kind can also occur where pairs meet in a group setting:

— My literacy group isn't really operating as a group. It is a lot of individuals. Because the attendance has been so bad, there isn't really a feeling of a group, a feeling of group involvement. My ESL group all know each other now. It is very much a group — there is anxiety if one of the group is missing. They are very concerned about each other. They function very much as a group, they help each other, they support each other.

Reference is frequently made, by tutors and others, to **the importance of raising the student's confidence** and this was often seen as the most notable single advance made by him. What the perceptions of the tutors, as related here, brought home to us was that the tutor's confidence was an equally essential ingredient: confidence both in her own ability to continue making forward progress in unfamiliar country with few signposts, and confidence also in the student's response, even

where little visible sign of progress existed. The chance for the volunteer to receive regular support, guidance when called for, and reassurance from someone in whom the tutor has confidence in turn, were all unavoidable requirements of a successful scheme with volunteers. Clearly there was a much better prospect of providing these when the pairs met at a common centre, where a professional teacher was constantly within call and where that most salutary of lubricants, the coffee break, was regularly provided. It was quite clear that the informal interaction between tutors and students at the coffee break often carried as much educational value as the formal tuition.

The tutors' use of centrally-produced materials varied a great deal, the general ethos of the scheme (or the attitudes of the trainers) being perhaps the determinant. Most schemes, as indicated above, encouraged tutors to develop their own materials in association with the student, and most tutors followed this line, regarding themselves as the major resource. They were however always on the lookout for ideas that they could develop and in the comments on published and broadcast materials this was clearly their standpoint:

— He seemed to prefer things that came off the top of my head. They were the sessions that were always the best, I think, sort of inspired sessions.

— I've used any technique which I felt is appropriate at any given time, going particularly by what I think he is going to enjoy and get on with.

The main resource materials commented on by the tutors interviewed were those published by ALRA and by the BBC. Of the *ALRA Tutors' Pack*, opinions were varied. A few tutors had not found it appropriate. For example:

— I do have the ALRA pack. I haven't yet used it with him. There has not been anything. I don't get it out religiously every week and look at it, but so far there hasn't been anything when I've looked at it that has fitted in with what I'm doing.

But on the whole the *Pack* was well received, as the following impressions record:

— I like the non-book approach.

— The arrangement of the tutors' pack is colourful and attractive enough to make *me* want to pick it up and read it.

— The print is clear, large and easily seen by the user.

— The content is presented in a format that can be easily used by tutors.

— It focusses on the skills and concepts that are fundamental to instructing adult literacy students.

In general however the *Pack* was used as a source of discrete ideas, or to work out ideas already held, rather than as a framework of continuity over a series of lessons.

Of the BBC publications, the *Adult Literacy Handbook* (first edition) was widely known. Like the ALRA *Pack* it provided a source of intermittent reference and as such was generally regarded as useful. A few tutors who had been urged to buy it felt that it was expensive at £1.20, (at the then price), though many local authorities provided free copies. Some had attempted to read through the handbook as part of their initial training, rather than use it as a reference book for their lessons, and found it somewhat daunting:

— I saw it at the induction course and did not get it then, feeling that I didn't want to overload myself with suggestions and ideas. You know, once I'd got more into the swing of it, I had more idea of what I did and what I didn't want.

More typical is this example of its use in tuition:

— Yes, I've got many exercises and things like that out of it. I found it quite useful just to look through . . . just as background. It is really full of stuff.

More directly promising as a quarry for tuition exercises was the students' workbook for *On the Move* but not many tutors seemed to use it thus. They thought it aimed at a much lower level of skill than their students required, though, as with the *Handbook,* it was effectively used in certain class situations, mainly for individual practice in handwriting. It was also bought by some students for extra practice which tutors encouraged; but in view of the large number of workbooks sold it was surprising to find how infrequently they appeared in tuition or were referred to in interviews.

The same was true of the workbook for *Your Move:* very few of the tutors claimed to know about this, although a few did say they used parts of it, such as the crosswords. It was not spoken of, however, in the same way even as many of the school reading schemes, which tutors often knew about even though they made up their own materials. The general im-

pression was that tutors were slow to make use of published sources unless someone had clearly pointed out their application to a particular student's problems, and this was more likely to happen in group situations than in home tuition. The organisers' high opinion of the BBC *Handbook* probably derives rather from its use in training schemes and at tuition centres than from widespread experience of it among home-based pairs.

Tutors' perceptions of the broadcasts were even more ambivalent. While there was almost universal appreciation of both *On the Move* and *Your Move* as effective, enjoyable and stimulating programmes that had had a great influence on public opinion about literacy, paradoxically there was hardly any attempt to use them in the teaching. The timing was spoken of as inconvenient and the pace contrary to the precept that materials should be produced to suit the individual student. Indeed there was little sign that even those tutors who admitted to being constantly on the look-out for ideas and material ever thought of taking them from the television programmes. The prevailing attitude is well illustrated by the comment of a tutor whose student did make use of them:

> — He has been watching *On the Move* and using the Workbook. He used to bring it along to class and I used to help him with it, but now he prefers to get on with it at home and concentrate in class on the material I give him.

Tutors referred to the difficulty a student would have in watching regularly at home, when family preferences might dictate an alternative programme; but it was not clear whether this view was based on specific knowledge or, as the research team suspected, on mere surmise.

A few class centres, where video-tapes of some of the programmes were available, did make some use of them, but even this appeared to be at the instance of the professional teacher or the organiser and to have little appeal to the volunteer helper.

This kind of response appears to have been established by *On the Move,* which was judged to be for recruiting rather than teaching, and was then carried over to *Your Move* so that the teaching element in the later series was not recognised. Indeed, in one of the research areas where a specific

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check was made, one third of the tutors who were interviewed during the autumn of 1976 and the spring of 1977 did not know of *Your Move*, and fewer than half had seen any of the programmes.

Awareness of the BBC radio programmes for tutors was likewise patchy. A majority of tutors either did not know of them or did not listen, though isolated instances were found of tutors who followed and enjoyed them, or who had attended training schemes where tape recordings of them were used. Typical comments were:

Interviewer: Have you heard of any of the radio programmes for tutors?
Tutor: When were they on?
Interviewer: They were on at about 7.00 pm on a Tuesday evening on Radio 3.
Tutor: Well, I'll be blowed.

Or:

— The talks were on BBC Radio 3, they were too early for me. I managed to hear one, belting home from work, you know.

But also:

— I listen to Radio 3 quite a lot. . . That's where the original programmes were, *Teaching Adults to Read*. That I found very interesting. . . It said at the beginning of the programmes, 'Do not expect any hard and fast training'. And it's quite right. You cannot be trained where you cannot ask questions. But it certainly stimulates interest.

Finally, we have to record that throughout the interviews there were virtually no unprompted references to Independent Television or to local radio (except where the tutor had been recruited through that medium), to the BBC radio series *Next Move* (which came in at the end of the research period) or to other broadcasts and films. The inescapable impression was that, for the great majority of the volunteer tutors, the experience of their literacy work was of an intensity that screened it from other influences of their lives: the mass media, even those broadcasts specific to literacy, belonged to the great world outside and could not easily be brought into the perspective of their relationship with their student.

CHAPTER 6
THE STUDENTS

In Chapter 3 pp 22-23, we summarised the perceptions of a number of students at the beginning of Phase II of the campaign. They were all in group tuition of one kind or another. During the rest of the research period more students were interviewed including a due proportion in home tuition. We present here the perceptions recorded in these interviews over the three years of development.

Who were the students?
Perhaps the most important matter to emphasize at the outset is that the students who came forward were not necessarily representative of the total population of sub-literate adults. Indeed, there is a strong likelihood that they were not representative. The following text deals with the self-selected population of students who enrolled for tuition and stayed in it for some time.

According to the ALRA returns, there were 45,767 students under tuition in February 1976 and 69,398 in February 1977. Of those, 18.9 per cent (8,680) and 16.5 per cent (11,515) respectively were in Greater London. Within these overall figures there is a local variation in the composition of the student body.

As the campaign developed, more women students — also distributed proportionally in the same age groups — came forward: in late 1975 the usual estimate was one-fifth women; by late 1976 this had become one-third.

As with other personal details, ages of students are not officially recorded. However ALRA, through LEA officers, gathered information from 6,600 students in 1976, and the research teams provided evidence derived from two local schemes. The details are summarised in the table overleaf: What is noticeable here is the number of students in their found in adult education generally.

Percentage of students by age

	ALRA 1976[a]	Research Area A Mid-1977 (from statistical returns)	Research Area B Sample from students interviewed Autumn 1976 to mid-1977
	6600	530	41
Age Groups: Under 21	16.9	16.4	21.9
21 — 30	32.7	34.8	21.9
31 — 40	27.4	28.2	19.5
41 — 50	15.3	16.3	21.9
Over 50	7.5	4.3	14.6

[a]Source: ALRA Report 1975/76, p.55

Between a half and two-thirds of students were, or had been married. Occupations were very varied. By no means all were in manual or unskilled jobs; nor was there generally a high proportion of unemployed, though this of course varied very greatly according to area. The following is an analysis of 39 students interviewed in one scheme in early 1977:

A. Garage owner, motor fitter, bus fitter, coach-driver/fitter, electrical vehicle fitter, student (automobile engineering), market gardener, foreman groundsman, farmer, nurseryman (2); supervisor (engineering), TV repairman, electrician, carpenter/joiner, welder (farm machinery); student (training for nursing). Total 17

B. Kitchen hand, stable hand, road sweeper, building labourer, farm worker (2), painter, warehouseman, baker, male factory worker (3), lorry driver. Total 13

C. Housewife (2) — one female factory worker, one a home help and one a shop assistant. Total 5

D. Unemployed — 4

This analysis, showing almost half of the students in relatively skilled and demanding occupations, confirms the impressions given by the tutors about the general background of students. There were urban areas, however, where the proportion of unskilled and manual workers and of unemployed was much higher.

Some schemes have made special efforts to recruit itinerants into literacy tuition, with a reasonable measure of success; and, in recalling their schooldays, students often spoke of frequent removal from one area to another. But the literacy students in general were not an unsettled population: in one of the research areas, for example, an urban and working-class area, a check showed that 80 per cent of the native English-speaking students had lived there for more than five years.

There was much more variation than had been expected in the levels of reading ability shown by the students. Overall the assessments of the tutors and organisers, as established by our research, produced the following approximate proportions:

30% of students were beginners, with limited social sight vocabulary and little idea of how to tackle a simple written passage.

40% of students were rather better, knowing some social sight words and key connecting words like *in, and, of.*

30% of students could read 'with ease', meaning that they could read fluently most of the time, deal with everyday reading and know how to go about overcoming the reading problems they were likely to meet. (They were what are often referred to as 'spellers'.)

Here again, however, we enter the caveat that those were the students who stayed: many people's opinion was that the early drop-outs or non-attenders after referral contained a high proportion of beginners. It needs to be added that there were very few students from sectors of multiple deprivation in our society, where it is generally assumed that many true illiterates would be found.

In so far as it is possible to construct a profile of a typical student, given the variations, it would contain some or all of the following features:

(a) He will be acutely aware that he does not have what he regards as effective reading, writing, spelling or computational skills.

(b) He will be aware that his sub-literacy may well limit his work, his security and his opportunities in the world around him.

(c) He will have feelings of guilt and a fear of ridicule in social interaction because of his illiteracy.

(d) He will have fashioned a series of defences against revealing his condition.

(e) He will have selected a variety of literate contacts who can perform for him the survival requirements involving reading and writing.
(f) He will associate his illiteracy with an under-estimate of his own intellectual capacity.
(g) His perception of a possible return to learning will be coloured by a recollection of disagreeable experiences he had in his school.
(h) His damaged self-image will make him vulnerable and particularly susceptible to broken promises, either direct or implied.
(i) He will tend to have a restricted circle of friends and associates whom he trusts and with whom he will talk about himself.

Students in literacy schemes are clearly not definable in terms of their common lack of particular literacy skills. Certainly they are all disadvantaged, but not just in the usual terms of occupation or income or social status. They come from very broad bands of society, from different age groups (though with a concentration of 20-40 year olds), and with different social and educational needs. Whether any single form of basic education could be appropriate to such a diverse body of students must be open to question. The remainder of this chapter will illustrate the range of this diversity as the students themselves expressed it.

The sources of information about the scheme were often hazy in students' minds. Being usually very sensitive about their deficiencies, they had first to learn that a service was generally available before enquiring about its local provision. There is no doubt that the broadcasts had a substantial effect in providing this general information; equally, there is no doubt that local advertising and particularly personal contacts played the major part in persuading a student to attend a particular centre. Moreover, it often appeared that a general thought of enrolling was translated into action only becuase of the persistent encouragement of a relative or employer and such encouragement would not have been available without the general publicity given to the problem of adult illiteracy.

The process is well illustrated in the following transcript of an interview between a student (S), his wife (SW) and the research interviewer (I):

I: Tell me how you came into the scheme?

S: How I came into the scheme: it was on television a couple of times. They had half hour programmes, I believe.

SW: You saw it on 'On the Move' and on 'Panorama', didn't you?

S: 'Panorama' was the main one really because they had the length of time to do it in; this really made up my mind to go in for it.

I: 'Panorama' was right at the beginning of October, wasn't it?

S: There was a little programme on about it — 'On the Move' which was really on and off before — it was the first one that came on actually — before we saw it which drew our attention to it because we had thought about going in for this writing. I have. The wife got on to [the County] and they said they had nothing going at the time.

I: When was that? Was that a while back?

S: Yes, two years ago.

SW: I did not know who to write to so I wrote to the Chief Education Officer. He wrote back and said he was sorry that there was nothing going at the moment, there might be something in the future and they would let us know, but we never heard. It was rather disappointing because [my husband] had made up his mind to do something and there did not seem to be anything about. But when we saw this we said, 'We'll get on to that, you know'.

S: It flashed through. It was on 'Panorama' for half an hour, wasn't it?

SW: That's what made us . . .

The reasons for enrolling given by students were again varied and often there was a mixture of reasons. Occasionally the interview left a suspicion that there were deeper reasons than those stated. About one fifth of those seen had advanced a 'functional' reason, such as acquiring a driving licence, but many continued beyond the attainment of that immediate goal and evinced wider and deeper reasons than the original pretext.

Most of the students were quite ready to talk about their goals and motives and it is therefore possible to construct some general categories. These are not listed in any particular order, nor are they mutually exclusive.

(a) **Vocation.** Some were unemployed and hoping to increase their chances of a job. Among them were women who needed to earn because they were divorced or left alone, because the husband was unemployed, or because the husband's wages

were low. But the motive may be more than the simple quest for employment:

— I've always wanted to do some kind of nursing but if you can't read or write on a chart or read a label on a bottle of medicine no one will hire you. I hope I can go on learning so that I can get a job in a hospital or even a home to nurse and help sick people. And I'll be helping myself at the same time.

A larger number however sought to improve their performance in a present job.

In many of the training courses for tutors prominence was given to the probable importance of job interests in the minds of students, and tutors were encouraged to plan their material with these interests in mind. In practice, however, they were not paramount. By far the most common reasons for enrolling stemmed from challenges and relationships in social life or from personal self-image.

(b) **Parenthood.** Parents, especially women, often referred to the need to write notes to school, the wish to read to their children or to help them with school work:

— What really made me do it [i.e. contact the BBC] is that our daughter is five now and she has learned to read at school . . . I am just keeping ahead of her.

There was also the father, trying to persuade his son to stay on at school, who thought that by joining a literacy scheme himself he countered his son's argument, 'If you can't read or write and you get along all right, why should I finish school?'

(c) **Social opportunity**

— If people in my class are ever going to get anywhere, it is up to me and people like me, who cannot read or write, to get some education as fast as we can.

And:

— It's a great opportunity to have a second chance at education. I'll do my best not to let down the ones who made this chance possible for me and others like me. I sincerely hope that the many people given this second chance will appreciate it as much as I do.

Or:

— I'd like this scheme to go on for a long time because I plan to go on to more adanced work, if I can. I'm learning very much . . . I feel that if I could progress in this scheme, it would give me a

better start for the things I plan for myself later on.

An immigrant student put it thus:

— It looks like we are now getting some breaks and if we are going to make anything of these breaks, it is up to us to get as much education as we can.

(d) Social interaction

— I feel very uncomfortable and nervy when I talk to my friends.

Or:

— I can hardly bring myself to talk to people I don't know very well because I just know that they will know that I'm illiterate as soon as I open my mouth.

Or:

— People will say, did you see such-and-such in the newspaper? You don't know what to say.

(e) Self image

— I think some people think, because you cannot read or write, you are mental. You are not a bit mental really, but they give you that appearance. You are dim, you know. If you cannot write something down on a bit of paper you have got no brains. But you have really.

It was clear from the interviews that the higher the student's personal valuation of education, the greater was likely to be his sense of failure at not having mastered the elementary skills of reading, writing or spelling. Inadequacy in literacy was often singled out as a major cause of personal anxiety, shame or failure simply because, at school, this was the area in which their contemporaries had so obviously outstripped them.

Experiences at school, as might be expected, figured largely in the students' reflections on why they had literacy difficulties. They started off their discussion of their past by giving *the* reason why they had difficulties. Here is a typical list from one area sample, in order of importance:

Illness when child — missed schooling or sent to special school because of health (with little emphasis on literacy)	— 10
Just got behind (don't know why) — never caught up	— 8
Did not try enough in school	— 7
School did not/could not give enough help	— 6

War: schooling interrupted by evacuation, or poor schooling because of war	— 3
English not first language	— 2
Traumatic experience when young child at school	— 2
Many changes of school	— 1
Missed school — stayed at home to help mother	— 1

Elsewhere the order might be varied, but the component items were the same. Recollections of school experiences varied, but almost universal was the remembered feeling of inadequacy whenever reading and writing had to be done and (perhaps surprisingly) of a loss of respect from their fellows.

Some students blamed their schools, but very few indeed blamed their parents. Normally they attributed their lack of progress to their own inadequacy, laziness, the lack of understanding on the part of particular teachers, or broken schooling for one reason or another. The following are examples of this general feeling that their problem started early in life:

— I always thought I was different and I always assumed I could not do it . . . I always assumed that I'd something missing upstairs.

And:

— When I first went to that school I had a good teacher, but the trouble with him was that he was a bit too lenient, you know. If he said 'Do the work!' I would do it, but if I got anything wrong he'd say 'Write it out again, but do it right'. But when I asked for him to help me, he didn't bother. That was the main thing wrong with me. I didn't want to do it unless someone could bother to help me.

And:

— This really sticks up in my mind. I remember the teacher asked me to get up and spell 'the'. I remember I had to stand up and all the other kids looking at you, kept jeering and taking the juice out of you and I couldn't imagine what 'the' looked like even if it had been written down. I'll never forget it. That really embarrassed me. I remember she said, 'T', what is the next letter?' I just didn't know. Maybe everybody else knew but I didn't.

This student went on to say:

— I used to worry a lot at school. In the first 2 or 3 years [since

leaving school] I changed a lot. If I couldn't do something — say an essay, I used to worry about that, really bad, get really riled.

Another typical history:

— When I was at school there were 44 in the class and if you were a good chap you were at the front and if you were a bad chap you were at the back — we don't want to hear from you. The teacher used to start writing that end, carry on right the way down the board: the time I got half way down this board he had started rubbing this lot out and in the end, of course, I just said 'Phew'. You know I was always staying behind for detention, not that it made any difference because I couldn't write any more anyway which really threw me off at the beginning. By the time I got to the senior school nobody was teaching you how to read — well, nobody was teaching you in the Juniors.

And:

— We never had a form teacher. We were always being messed about. Quite often the teachers were leaving. We never knew where we were. We changed from one thing to another. Also the classes were so large — if you were good you got more attention, naturally. If you were in the middle or bottom end they couldn't be bothered really. To a certain extent because the classes were so large, I suppose.

And:

— The only thing they [the teachers] did do was send me out in the garden a lot. Because I knew a lot about gardening, you see.

And:

Interviewer: You blame yourself, do you, looking back?

Student: Yes, I do. Yes and no, you know. The teachers we had, one particular one who took us for RE, I never got on with the bloke from the day I see him. Every time I went in that class — bang, an argument comes. It comes to one day when he gets my temper up, I got so mad, I just turned round and lumped him. That really turned me off school. I thought 'Oh, if they are going to be like this, handing out arguments, is it worth going?' But I carried on going. I got chucked out of that lesson — I used to go and sit in the library — mess about in the library. You look back at that and think was it worth it? It was worth it at the time. All right you were a big boy of the class but now, never again.

And:

— You look on the funny side of it now but when you really think about it who was the fool? That was us obviously. I was sitting there doing nothing when I could have been Managing Director of a firm or something (laughs).

But, as always in this area of research, one finds the exceptions to the general rule and some few students blamed their parents:

— I suppose I should have pushed myself. I never tried to teach myself. I've always blamed my father. He was an educated man. I can never understand why he didn't push me more. My mother couldn't read except for magazines — couldn't spell at all. We were talking about this over Christmas. I said to him, 'You ought to have pushed me.' He said, 'I never had the time.' I said, 'You should have made time.' Because he is not an illiterate man himself. He should have done something while I was at school. Gone round the school — got some books and said, 'Right you are not going out tonight, you've got to . . .' Of course I never done any homework. All the teachers were old during the war.

What is striking about these recollectons of school is the common belief that if only they had been given some *individual* attention at school all would have been well. It is therefore not surprising that when joining adult schemes, so many students were attracted by the prospect of individual attention. That was their initial criterion of a good scheme. For the same reasons students in one-to-one tuition were generally reluctant to join groups in classes and where classes did not offer substantial one-to-one tuition they felt cheated and tended to leave.

The adult experiences of students were just as important as their recollections of school. Almost without exception they were convinced that others would regard them as dim; and although in many aspects of daily life there would be few reminders of their deficiencies there was the constant fear of their problem being unexpectedly revealed on a social occasion. It was as if they were on a road that was known to be mined, and every next step might set one off. Many of them told of moments when they did:

— My Mum didn't want me to get married, so my Dad went up there and said I was illiterate and all this, couldn't read properly and all this, to her parents. Her brother told him to '---- off out,

it is up to . . . [the sister] what she wants to do. She knows what [he's] like'.

Q: How did you feel?

I could have throttled him. But that's my Dad, so . . . He only did it because my Mum pushed him. Don't matter. It's like water off a duck's back.

Again:

— The way I look at it like is, well, all right, I can't read but, at least I've got my strength, I can work, and if she [the girlfriend] takes the . . . she ain't no good to me. That's the attitude I take that's got me through life so far. If I tell a mate and he stands there and takes the juice he ain't much of a mate.

Or:

— I did once go to an interview and I suppose the bloke must have been in a bad mood because he said, 'Didn't you f . . . well go to school?' and there was blinking great offices up there — great open plan thing — and I just walked up to somebody and said, 'Is So-and-So about?' And he said, 'Yes, I'm 'im.' I said, 'I've come for a job.' 'Can't you wait, can't you read that says 'Reception' there?'

Or:

— Like at work there'd be a joke in the paper. They'd say, 'Read that, Eileen.' I used to think, 'Oh God, here we go. 'And I'd look at it and maybe where I should be saying, 'Oh, isn't that terrible', I used to laugh. I just used to look at it and laugh. My friend would say, 'Oh that is terrible, Eileen, Oh, you find that funny.' I felt ever so small.

Or:

— I've tried to hide it as well as I could. Successfully so far. You live like an animal really. Afraid that somebody is going to find out — that's the trouble. That's why I decided to do something about it. I didn't like always having to find a quick answer, getting out of things.

Q. Would people 'take the mickey', look down on you, do you think?'

I don't think they . . . But you would feel so ashamed yourself. Feel so bad about yourself.

And then, they perceive people's contempt; for example:

— There are so many things accepted nowadays as matter-of-fact things but not being able to read and write isn't accepted. There's something there — it's worse than to be somebody who's queer. People say 'That bloke over there can't read and

write'. It's all snigger, snigger, sort of thing. It seems ridiculous that certain things are taken for granted.

Or:

— When you say, 'I can't read' or 'I can't spell' people look. 'Can't you?' It is like you've got the plague, I think, isn't it?

But there are those whose defensive mechanism is to reveal all:

— Well, a lot of people would be [bothered] but I'm very, very individualistic. What other people think doesn't matter as far as I'm concerned. It hasn't stopped me getting on, not being able to spell. In any case I read somewhere that H. G. Wells couldn't write a line without a spelling mistake. Several other writers too for that matter.

Or:

— I don't care if they know. I'd rather they knew than I'd cover it up really because most people if they know you can't read and write they'll help you. But if you try and cover it up they ain't bothered with you.

And others who can tell of wry experiences such as this:

— That was on the occasion when I helped the plant-hire bloke with an artic. low loader to pick up a big 'craw'. This is a thing I thought would never happen but it did happen. He sent this bloke to me to get this 'crawler' because it was a two-man job. I drove the artic because I've got a Class I [Heavy goods vehicle licence]. We get to . . . ham and we get to this cross-roads. We got to go one way or the other. The problem was in knowing which way to go — right or left. I said to this bloke, 'Which way is it then?' And unfortunately I did not have the name writ down or else I could have looked at that and looked at all the letters on the post. Of course you know what came up — he couldn't read nor write and neither could I. So we were in a terrific mess. What made it worse was that some-body came along and I asked them. He said, 'You can't go wrong, it is marked up, you can't go wrong.' Well, of course we were still in a muddle. That was so embarrasing. This is the thing.

But by too many the lack of literacy skill was felt to be more than an embarrassment at work: it blocked promotion or transfer from one job to another, and was a possible reason for future dismissal:

— The only thing that I'm afraid of — I'm very much afraid of — and this is one of the reasons I did take it up, is that the day might come, and I think it will, when Public Service Vehicle

people may say, 'Anybody who works on a bus — A PSV — must have qualifications otherwise we don't see them as fit people to work on them.'

Q. A written test, do you think?

Yes, this will come. A certificate of some description. That's quite natural, that's going to come. You appreciate this has been the worst year for bus crashes in history?

Or:

— You have to do 'job evaluation'. They want 10 foolscap pages of what you think of your job. You could write it in one word — 'rubbish' — but they want you to do all this. Say exactly what you do each day. Check tyres, dipstick — which none of us actually do, but they want it all written down. I showed [the tutor] a letter I had had about this job evaluation. We sat down and tried to work it out between us. [The tutor] found it hard. The way they put it over, they can't put it simple for blokes like me. There is a lot of people at our place who can't even fill in their time-sheets. I help fill theirs in.

Or:

— You've got to have education. I really want to do it now. I really am worried about it now because I think if you can't read and write there ain't going to be nothing for you. Near enough every job you go to nowadays you've got to fill something in. I've been to a lot of these factories. You've even got to fill in a form there. The government is making it so you have to fill forms in for near enough everything — for safety, one thing and another. It just gets back to you one way or another, you see. You can't get out of it no way now. It's just got to be done. All the factory jobs, I could have done them as easy as you like. I can do anything with my hands.

There were also students who recognised their disability and confidently claimed that their jobs did not require literacy skills:

— I just watched blokes. Blokes showed us like welding. After a while you pick it up. You do it. It is the only way. It doesn't matter how much theory they tell you, it's doing the practical that counts. That can tell you how a car goes, how it starts but one day it won't start. You read in the book and it will say it should start if that works — and it doesn't. And a bloke who might not be able to read the book will come up and say it is such-and-such. You do get people come who've learnt the theory of the thing but something goes wrong they are knackered, like. They don't know what happens. But another bloke will.

Or:

— When I first started I went to Youth Employment. First, it was Merchant Navy — not that. Then all these bum jobs — repairing shoes. Then I got this job but they wanted me to go to college to do an apprenticeship. I knew I couldn't do that. So I thought: trainee — you get a bit more money. Suited me. You pick up more of the practical, not the theory so much. I've got on — there's no writing — just read job cards occasionally.

For the most part, therefore, the students' experiences in adult life had reinforced the feeling of inferiority that they had brought from school: they were vulnerable to ridicule and rejection by their fellows as they had been from teachers and children at school. Much of the reluctance of those who have not come forward to tuition may well be due to an expectation, first, that it would be like school over again, and secondly that it would be yet another exposure to the contempt of others. Perhaps some of those who dropped out early did indeed find it so.

Those who persisted for three months or more, however, expected — and found — in their tutors a very different demeanour from that they met in the public at large. And they reciprocated. Our observations confirmed what the tutors said, that nearly all students were characterised by their courtesy towards their tutors. Over and over again tutors referred to them as 'real gentlemen'. But this difference was a long way from the partnership in learning that adults should be capable of. Initially the students complied with whatever the tutor suggested ('Yes, if you like'), for the tutor was the fount of all knowledge in literacy. Even where they felt they were being taught wrongly, or with irrelevant material such as long word-lists to learn, persistence would be required from the tutor to bring it to light; and many who dropped out must have chosen that route in preference to challenging the authority of the tutor. When they were told, as they often were, that they could switch tutors if they did not get along, the students were incredulous.

This imperfect perception of the relationship in adult learning tended towards another understandable but unhelpful attitude: work was what you did under the tutor's direction and unsupervised homework was therefore a curious thing for the tutor to expect you to do. Tutors often commented on the great difficulty they had in persuading students to make in-

dependent use of their newly-acquired skills.

The picture painted above was derived largely from those in one-to-one home tuition. Where groups were successfully established a true learning partnership more easily developed. It emerged even faster and more soundly when there was interaction between students, notably at the coffee break, where the influence of a skilled group leader could create an awareness of what *adult* education, as distinct from a postponed schooling, can be. These perceptions of the student about the nature of learning are crucial: as long as he remains imprisoned in his past experience his learning opportunities are diminished and his very attendance problematic.

What did the students think of their tuition? About half of those interviewed were in home tuition, the other half in some form of group teaching. As we have said, there was a predisposition from the experience of school to clutch at one-to-one teaching where this was offered. But the research evidence leads to doubts about the efficiency of home tuition. It was widely adopted because of the cult of absolute confidentiality in the early days of the campaign. But the researchers found, where it was possible to observe the process at first hand, that very often the situation had become stagnant in one of two ways: either the learning relationship had given place to a cosy socialising; or one partner, normally the tutor, had become dominant and the other unduly dependent. It was in the latter situation that one found the student who would refuse to write except in the tutor's presence, or who would not move on from home to a group.

This is not to say however that this degree of personal attention was unproductive: there were too many testimonies to its value as a stimulus, even among those who had eventually progressed to a group. For example, from a young woman:

— My best experience was having the teacher concerned about me learning. I've never had anyone to care if I learned anything or not. The teacher cared.

Or:

— This project makes me feel wanted and not a cast off. It makes me feel wanted and important.

Or:

— I like the scheme because my tutor pays me some attention. When I was in regular school, no one paid me any attention and

I didn't like to go. Here my tutor puts me at ease and this makes me feel good. Also I'm learning very well.

And a student who joined a group, on first enrolling:

— Bit apprehensive at the beginning. Didn't know how many were going. If there were a lot and they were better than me then I would have felt a bit embarrassed that I was going to say the wrong thing. In fact it was the other way round . . . We have discussions which used to follow up at the end. I found it didn't matter whether it was talking about what we'd done, or anything that had cropped up in the week — whether we'd any problems — to do with spelling, writing or anything general. This was a good idea because it brought us out — those of us who were not feeling confident speaking, mixing with others. I find this good.

In discussing their tuition students very rarely mentioned teaching methods or materials: the person of their teacher filled the whole of their vision. But the tutor's style and personal qualities were vividly realised:

— She's strict, she gets at the blackboard, pumps it into your brain, makes sure you have got it. I was nearly going to give up. I thought shall I take this torture or not? Then I went to the library with her and she wouldn't fill in the form for me — she said, 'Well, you can, can't you?' What I mean to say is that for the time she's done wonders. I like her. If I don't go she rings up, 'Do you want to carry on?' A little bit of faith in her and she'll bring you out of your shell.

And:

— She's red hot, on the needle. She's hard, tells me to get on with it and at the same time when I do do well she praises me. Encourages me all the time. I couldn't have wished to get anybody any better. If I'm down she will pick me up. Being a headmistress there is a lot she has at her disposal. Lots of knowledge which other people don't have. I'm learning grammar in mine which gives me something to look forward to more than spelling — what's made it more interesting.

And:

— The woman I have, I have got used to her now. I don't know how they match up but they make a good match. They certainly picked the right person to help me.

And:

— . . . [The tutor] turned up. Very fortunately she was the right

person and I have got on very well with her. To my surprise. I was astonished really.

By far the greater majority of students who continue are simply grateful that their tutor continues to persevere, especially when they are conscious of their slow progress:

— If I do anything with my hands — building — I can do it a lot quicker than picking this up. Once it do come, it comes all at once. Like 'Ough' sounds — those, now I can get them. It may need to be put across to me more than once but I get them in the end. That is the main thing.

— Sometimes I wonder am I going on too far, how long is the tutor going to put up with me, things like that. How long will I be going on like this myself?

Thus, students did not perceive tuition periods in terms of subject content but rather in terms of a developing relationship in which they were reviewing themselves through the eyes of another human being. It was in this context that the research team came to understand the matter of confidentiality: our experience clearly indicated that students were not concerned about privacy in the form of secrecy, but that they feared being led into a relationship in which they would be slighted. If that happened in a house, escape was easier than if it were in a semi-public place like a group centre. They had to learn that they could safely enter the group.

We turn now to the **factors that led to withdrawal** or so-called 'drop-out' — an unsatisfactory term but accepted here because of its customary use. This is a difficult area, partly because of the uncertainty surrounding attendance in home tuition which we have pointed out several times.

There appeared to be three 'danger points' at which withdrawal was more likely:

(i) Between making the initial call and being first contacted from a local scheme;
(ii) Between that contact and starting tuition;
(iii) In about the third week of tuition.

An examination of the records of one scheme revealed that of the 102 students from October 1975 to April 1977 who applied to join the scheme and then withdrew some time during that period:

24 withdrew before being interviewed
29 withdrew before being assigned to tuition
49 withdrew after beginning tuition

Of the 49 who withdrew after beginning

13 were satisfied with the level of literacy they had achieved;
14 lost interest in tuition for various reasons, e.g. because they felt they were not making any progress; they did not get on with their tutors; they no longer had time;
5 left because of family illness or general difficulties at home;
4 left because of personal illness;
4 left because their tutor, on whom they had come to rely very strongly, withdrew from the scheme;
5 moved house; and
4 left for work reasons.

Dropout before being visited by the representative of the local scheme was common enough to cause concern in many areas. In one voluntary scheme it was found that, between April 1976 and March 1977, out of 89 withdrawals 31 were people who rang up but never appeared. In another area, from October 1975 to November 1976 the figure varied between 10 per cent and 20 per cent of *total* enquiries; and similar figures were quoted by a number of organisers.

Though it was not possible to interview students who had made the first contact and thereafter proceeded no further, some students were interviewed who had made an initial first contact some time ago, had given up and had then been persuaded to try again because of the BBC programmes. Moreover many other students had 'thought about doing something' for a very long time, sometimes years, before finally coming forward. All of them emphasised their nervousness at the moment of following up their decision, and the effort of will required to meet the literacy organiser. No doubt that effort was too much for some who had made the first call but could face no more. There is strong evidence that without the continued encouragement of a member of the family many of the students would not have persisted to the point of tuition:

— Yes, [the wife] rang London. Actually that night, I was watching it myself. She rang up and I'm pleased she did now. It's such a relief, it's a millstone around my neck just taken away. I'm sure more people could come but they don't realise it's . . . I think people must think it's more like school. It's not.

Very many said 'We' rang up, or 'We' decided. But the situation could be made worse by delay:

— [On ringing the BBC referral number] he took my particulars and said 'You'll hear from us'. But what happened was it stayed too long for me to hear from them; so that sort of put me off again . . . I never went. It sort of boiled over and I chickened out.

This experience of delay occurred often enough among these second-attempt students to raise doubts about the organisers' claim of speed in dealing with referrals. The explanation lies in the differing perspectives: on the one hand the overburdened organiser, doing his best to cope with numbers of applicants, and on the other the lone enquirer, nervously awaiting the consequences of his impulsive act. There is good evidence that the rate of dropout between asking for help and receiving the first response was directly influenced by the length of time taken to respond.

Dropout before joining a scheme but after the first contact appeared to account for something between 5 and 10 per cent of all enquiries, and in some areas for up to 25 per cent of all withdrawals.

It is impossible to correlate these withdrawals with local fees but there is evidence that individuals were put off by the demand for a fee: a number of referral officers spoke of the disappointment, even dismay, that crossed the faces of enquirers when fees were mentioned. Very many students had inferred from *On the Move* — though there would seem no warrant for doing so — that the help offered to them was free of charge and when fees of several pounds were demanded the effect was bound to be frustrating.

Of course, the authorities concerned said that the fee could be waived where necessary; but the state of mind of the would-be student at the moment of making his big step into public view seems hardly conducive to tangling with regulations for claiming remission of fees. How many dropped out at this point for this reason cannot be estimated; but there is sufficient evidence from the feelings of those who persisted to be confident that some did.

Dropout during tuition we defined as withdrawal within the first three months; thereafter it was not possible to say whether a student had truly dropped out or had reached a point of satisfaction, either by having completed a self-set assignment such as reading the Highway Code or by having gained enough confidence to proceed on his own.

In the observation of many tutors, there was a period of 3-6 weeks during which adjustment to the scheme took place and the continuance of the student after that period depended on his perception of the progress he was likely to make. This was when a change to a more compatible tutor could be made if desired but students often simply left with a polite excuse rather than assume that there was anything wrong with the tutor or the scheme. They felt they had been confirmed in their view that there was no place for them in the educational world.

Patterns of attendance beyond those early danger points can be observed through the records of class or group meetings. Persistence and regularity in home tuition are much more difficult to ascertain.

Registers of attendance were examined in a number of schemes. They showed astonishing differences. Where a scheme was working well the level of attendance, at 60-70 per cent throughout the year, was usually better than one would expect in a normal evening class. But there were groups where no more than one in ten of the students completed the year.

To quote specific examples: Scheme A had one paid tutor-leader with 25 volunteer aides: its 25 students were all beginners (no score on a standard test for reading age of 8). Of these 25, 9 had joined in 1975 and 16 during 1976, and all were present on the survey date in February 1977.

Scheme B also had a class of 10 students with a paid teacher and volunteer aides. The pattern of attendance and dates of joining are reproduced from the register:

Register of attendance of a class — September — December 1976

Student	Joining	Sept.				Oct.			Nov.					Dec.	
	Date	6	13	20	27	4	11	18	1	8	15	22	29	6	13
1.	Jan 1975	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2.	Jan 1975	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	a	1
3.	Sept 1975	1	1	1	1	a	a	1	1	1	a	1	a	a	a
4.	Jan 1976	a	a	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	a	1
5.	Sept 1976	–	–	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
6.	Jan 1976	1	a	1	1	1	1	a	1	1	1	1	1	1	a
7.	Oct 1976	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	1	1	1	a	a	1	1
8.	Dec 1976	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
9.	Sept 1975	a	a	a	1	1	1	a	a	a	a	1	a	a	a
10.	Jan 1976	1	1	a	1	1	1	1	1	1	a	1	1	1	1

The regularity and continuity of attendance are clearly shown here: Only one student (No.9) could be regarded as unsatisfac-

tory; though No.3 could be one who would be lost if no one encouraged him to return.

Scheme C was one which the research team found impressive for its thoughtfulness, enthusiasm and good organisation. A tutor-organiser was in charge, with a volunteer aide for each student. A sample page of the register lists 30 students: during 24 weeks in 1975/76 there were 22 occasions when 15 or more were present, and during the next 24 weeks there were 9 such occasions.

Scheme D had a class of 10 students with one paid teacher. Over a period of 13 weeks from September to December 1976, of the 10 students:

2 never attended
1 never attended but was willing to have home tuition
1 attended twice
3 attended 7 or 8 times
3 attended 10 times

The total was 54 out of 130 possible attendances, or 41.5 per cent, but if the non-starters are ignored, the attendance was 60 per cent.

There is some evidence of persistent attendance among matched pairs. An examination of 147 pairs who remained in tuition for more than six months in 1977 showed the following pattern:

3 had been going longer than 2½ years
6 had been going between 2 and 2½ years
7 had been going between 18 months and 2 years
29 had been going between 1 year and 18 months
55 had been going between 6 months and 1 year
47 had been going less than 6 months

Thus, where registers were produced, the general picture was of much steadier attendance and greater persistence than would be suggested by the popular idea that there has been heavy drop-out during tuition. That idea derives from a crude comparison of total referral figures with totals under regular tuition and certainly there were numerous losses at the first two stages of the process. But among those who had settled down to tuition, and where schemes were well organised and sensitively and purposefully run, the rate of dropout was kept down to a level that compares very favourable with other forms of post-school education. This is highly creditable as all these students are unaccustomed to learning, sensitive to disappoint-

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ment and subject to emotional stresses that may easily disable their will to learn. Many of them had other problems too:

— I didn't have enough money for a babysitter and had no one to leave the children with.

Or:

— There was an invalid member of the family and no one to leave him with.

Or:

— After I took care of the family all day, I didn't feel like coming.

Or:

— After working all day, I was too tired.

How then did the students see their tuition? There were very few complaints or adverse criticisms: but then, we were interviewing the stayers. Similar interviews with dropouts or with non-participants would no doubt have drawn a different picture. Nevertheless, there was powerful testimony to the kinds of progress that the students felt they had made.

First, in the acquisition of literacy skills:

— I can write a letter for the first time in my life. The other night I wrote one. But if I wait ten or twenty minutes to re-read the letter I can understand what I writ.

And:

— At the start it was fairly difficult to pick it up again. But now after 18 months I've begun to break through and get really interested in it. I'm coming along fairly well but it was a fairly long time to pick up enough to start helping myself along. To start reading papers. It takes a while to get used to reading things. Living in a place where you think, I don't want to look at that, even if you could read some of it. You get so used to asking someone. You don't tend to try to help yourself.

And:

— Now I can sit down and make out a list to send the kids to the corner shop and I'm interested in doing it. I wrote a short letter to my son in the army. I didn't have an opportunity to go to school when I was growing up. I'm glad this opportunity came knocking at my door. I was ashamed before — but not any more.

Another delighted mother said:

— A few days ago I returned home and on the kitchen table was a

note from my son. It said 'Mom — I went to the library — be home later'. I could read it. It was the first time . . .

For many students the new-found ability to read has opened up a completely new world. In explaining what this means, one woman said:

— I think my best experience was reading my children's books.

And another woman, her face beaming:

— I have never been able to take the bus before because I couldn't read the signs and was afraid I would get lost. Now I can go any place I want to.

Secondly, there was a feeling of great achievement in having registered for the scheme at all:

— I never admitted it before that I couldn't read or write. Coming to the literacy project was a bad experience first but now I realise I need this education and more.

And:

— The toughest part about starting was listening to my friends telling me that 'You're too old to learn anything, and besides school is for kids.' Now that I'm here, they don't say anything; they just look at me and grin.

And:

— I went to a course and, believe me, my legs were trembling when I got there. My arithmetic is bad and my spelling's terrible and I suddenly got there and wondered why I was there. I thought I can't do one and I can't do the other. I did the only thing possible. The morning I arrived I told them I wasn't any good at either. I managed it all right in the end. I enjoyed it actually.

Thirdly, there were psychological and social benefits that the students were deeply aware of: phrases like 'I feel better about myself' occurred more often than any other in their accounts of their experience in tuition:

— I'm changed for the better. Before starting with my tutor I always felt depressed. Now I mingle more, feel better and I'm less nervous. Instead of thinking about my problems I have no time to think.

— I used to be ashamed around people and never say anything — they always called me quiet. Now since I started [in the literacy scheme] I learned to talk to people more.

— I speak better.

— I'm a different person.

— I think more of myself now — I'm happy and I suppose a bit proud.

— Learning makes me feel important.

Two particularly dramatic instances of this new self-respect were reported indirectly:

— Before the man entered the scheme, he had been abusing and neglecting his children. A social worker had been assigned to the case to protect the children. After the father had been attending literacy classes for several weeks, the social worker was no longer needed on the case because the father was no longer abusing or neglecting his children.

— One woman who had been under medical care and who was deeply apprehensive about people no longer needed the prop of medical care nor did she fear people any longer. She had made friends in her group.

Fourthly, there were references to improved family relationships, especially with children:

— They [the children] think more of us now, it gives them reassurance — they see that if the mother is interested in education it makes them study harder because they don't want mother to get ahead of them.

And:

— Now I've something interesting to do during the day and I'm helping myself become a better parent at the same time.

Many students spoke of the pleasure of reading to their children, of sharing an interest in the school-work and of not feeling secretly ashamed or fearful of the children's contempt.

At the same time most students realised that their progress was slow, that it would take a long time to reach the standards they wanted, and that there were social hurdles still to surmount:

— Some of my mates think that I'm wasting my time.

— My best friend seems uncomfortable with me now that I am learning to read.

— If it hadn't been for Mr A . . . I would never have started because all my people and friends told me I was just too stupid to learn anything. Now I know better, but I still can't tell them a thing.

— She always tells me that it [reading and spelling] will come in time, but I haven't got all the time, I have already lost out in school once, I must know how I am doing.

Moreover, relatively few students were found who were ready to exercise their skills in public. They might sign a cheque in public with confidence, but only after the details had been filled in at home. This reluctance was most noticeable in writing. Students generally believed they had made more progress with reading than with writing; but that most progress of all had been in feeling better about themselves. And this was seen more frequently in those who had attended groups than among those under tuition at home.

These two features — a gain of confidence but a reluctance to display it in public — reinforce from the students' perceptions the feeling of many organisers, that to make the best possible progress a student needed to move from the shelter of home tuition into the social world of a group or centre.

Reference should be made to two other groups of students who did not figure extensively among those interviewed but who present an important and different dimension. Referrals from social service departments and from probation officers were almost universally found to be failures: they were not personally motivated, could see little benefit to be gained and they left very quickly. The other group were the mentally handicapped, who presented a particular problem to coordinators because the untrained volunteer could not well be asked to take them on. For evident reasons, it was not possible to obtain the perceptions of these students, even when they were in the schemes under review.

The resource materials, as seen by the students, were simply what the tutor produced week by week and the students hardly ever knew where they had come from. The tutor knew what was good for them and provided it: theirs not to reason why. None of the students interviewed complained about the materials being used with their tutor; their only objections were to homework exercises which were meaningless, such as word lists, and too time-consuming. Consequently, the use of all the centrally produced resource material, whether in the form of publications or broadcasts, passed over the students' heads. We cannot therefore report students' peceptions of the effectiveness of either the published material or most of

the broadcasts: they were hardly ever mentioned.

Where *On the Move* was referred to it was generally approved; it was seen occasionally by many but regularly by very few; and it was remembered for the encouragement given by the figure of two millions. Comment was sometimes made about the level of the programmes, which was seen as too low, and about the students interviewed on it: a few students were affronted at being classified with them — 'I'm not as dim as that', they tended to say. But others identified with the students they saw and were helped by the fellow-feeling they engendered.

The effect of *On the Move* as a stimulus to come forward was frequently acknowledged — often, indeed, in terms of its effects on others rather than on the speakers; and questions about the similar effect of other broadcasts (such as the COI 'fillers') produced little response. Students recalled having seen 'something on television': the channel and the programme were not identifiable.

The difficulties of learning as experienced by the participants can be generalised from the interviews and a comparison may be drawn of the views of tutors and students.

So far as skills were concerned, the tutors were worried about the amount of progress and its direction, methods of teaching spelling, the problems of teaching groups of students of varying degrees of ability, and the lack of adult reading materials. The students were often discouraged by their slow progress in skills and the apparent randomness of spelling conventions.

Certain human problems were perceived; the tutors were concerned at the apparent lack of motivation or the docility of their students, the students' poor retention, their unwillingness to do homework and sometimes their students' difficulties in adjusting to standard written English, as opposed to dialect. The students, on the other hand, were much more aware of their own imperfections. They regretted their poor memory, they were aware of their lack of confidence in using their skills, they feared failure acutely; many regretted the holiday break when they forgot much, many found their failure to tune in to standard pronunciation embarrassing, and many felt frustration when the meanings of words eluded them. They were

vulnerable and diffident; the main problem for them was how to sustain and increase their self-confidence.

Tutors identified problems of organisation, such as the holiday breaks, particularly in the summer, when many group activities in local authority accommodation ceased. Some tutors thought their students' attendance was erratic, and that the time for tuition was too short. Similarly, students were aware of other demands on their time and regretted missing tuition or even forgetting their appointment with their tutor. Many students felt simply too tired to learn after a day's work and some who knew of day-release schemes expressed a desire for tuition during the day.

When these issues are considered, it is clear that there is a nexus between the personality of the tutor and of the student which, through interaction, produces an empathy conducive to the student's progress, and all these facets of the organisation, tuition and learning are interrelated.

In short, reading is not the flicker of an eye, nor is writing the twitch of a hand, rather they are impressions upon and expressions of the whole human personality. A belief in the importance of human relationships and in the vision of literacy as a means of widening and deepening individual human perspectives infuses our review in the next chapter of the adult literacy campaign.

CHAPTER 7
DEVELOPING PERSPECTIVES

I

The preceding three chapters, which record the first-hand experience of those directly involved in the students' learning, form the most important part of this book. The campaign existed for no other purpose than to enable students to learn, and it is at that level that evaluation must finally be set.

Two general features emerged from our research. First, and most striking, was the flexibility of the service provided, for every attempt was clearly being made to tailor the provision to individual students' needs. Secondly, no matter what the form of the local organisation, the progress of each student depended less upon what people did for him than upon the attitudes and relationships that informed their actions. Time and again, we observed the importance of an imaginative willingness to work together by everyone who came into contact with a student. Groups, for example, would put up with substandard or inappropriate accommodation if the atmosphere was friendly and encouraging; and the caretaker might be the one to establish that atmosphere. Tutors and students willingly made long or difficult journeys if they felt themselves identified with others in a common enterprise; and when difficulties arose the availability of an understanding organiser was crucial.

This quality of personal service is the most important element that our research has revealed, and before proceeding to any piecemeal evaluation we would pay tribute to a courageous enterprise, carried out with great devotion amid difficult financial circumstances, which brought a new dimension to the adult education service and which many of the participants spoke of with moving gratitude.

The research also revealed the complexity of human relationships upon which the service was founded. Any development of provision for adult literacy must recognise that complexity and preserve the personal quality. We therefore have no easy prescriptions for universal success. What we offer here is an attempt to identify questions raised by our research

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that providers need to reflect upon for the future. For the need for adult literacy has not disappeared. This chapter is not an obituary, but a progress report as an encouragement to further progress.

II

How to assess the progress? Different criteria suggest themselves. On the larger front there are the total numbers involved, the costs and the sources of funding, the effectiveness of the national initiatives such as broadcasting, the referral services, and the organisational patterns. Before turning to the tutor-student experience, we look briefly at each of these, asking not only how successful has the campaign been under that heading, but what are the questions raised by it.

First, as to numbers. The best estimate is that of ALRA that by February 1978 some 125,000 students had entered tuition and some 75,000 volunteer helpers had been recruited. That is, by any standards, a large and gratifying response: particularly since each student was one who had had a minimal slice of the educational cake in the past and was now being given an unexpected second helping; and since the volunteers, in widening their social and educational horizons by meeting adults with very different experiences, were in a real sense furthering their own education. Then, as the research progressed, we began to feel that the number of participants was a relatively minor criterion.

Nevertheless, in purely quantitative terms, the campaign must be accounted a success. If we take a bleakly conservative estimate that no more than one third of the entrants continued to a year, we have a figure that exceeds, for instance, the annual intake of the Open University.

Yet few organisers and education officers were complacent about the numbers they had reached. They were — probably rightly — sceptical of that blunt figure of two millions; but they were sensitive to the possibility of large numbers as yet undiscovered, especially in areas of multiple deprivation. They made it clear that, to deal with any substantial further increase in numbers (to say nothing of different types of provision), they would need both extra funds and radical changes of organisation and staffing. The nature and practicality of these changes is one of the questions raised by this consideration of

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total involvement against total target population.

Then questions of cost, and value for money, enter. In Chapter 3 we indicated the order of total expenditure, as far as it could be assessed. There is however no way of expressing this as a per capita cost, owing to the variations in students' length of stay and the mix of paid and unpaid service.

It has sometimes been claimed, with apparent logic, that a service based on the extensive use of volunteers must be relatively cheap. This was not the experience of the administrators. They were clear that the literacy service, particularly where volunteers were used for one-to-one home tuition, had higher unit costs than the normal adult education classes. The schemes were not devised for a normal adult-class clientele, but for a particular sector of the population needing particular types of support to enter upon the process of learning. The costs of a personal service which could reach out to that population, place them in effective educational milieux, recruit and train an adequate force of volunteers, give the necessary in-service support, and provide even a minimum of appropriate teaching resources, was one that could not be compared with those of normal educational courses in colleges or adult centres. Cheapness in that sense was not to be looked for.

On the other hand there was ample evidence of the underpayment of part-time organisers, to say nothing of the contribution of the unpaid volunteers, for their hours of commitment to the work. The word most often used was 'exploitation'. In Chapter 4 we have recorded signs that some were approaching the limits of their tolerance of this situation and were becoming resentful about a service that they felt to be increasingly under-financed. In cost per hour of service given, the literacy provision certainly was cheap.

If one asks about value for money, one has also to ask, whose money? The costs of training and tuition were borne about equally by ALRA and the local education authorities, with the latter contributing rather more as time went on. The effects of the ALRA grants have been described: they were remarkably influential, not only in direct funding of training and staffing, but in prompting local educational authorities to find matching resources of their own. Is this then a pattern of funding to be followed in other 'campaigns' in the future? There were signs, despite the universal admiration of ALRA's part, that some administrators would not welcome another

such initiative, regarding it as an encroachment on their independence of policy-making.

There was also a slow trend towards charging fees to the students. Here is one of the most difficult, and most emotive, of questions. Even those authorities who provide literacy tuition free of charge are bound to have second thoughts about extending the practice to continuation classes at more advanced levels and to wider ranges of basic education, including perhaps basic vocational training. Where are the boundaries of policy to be drawn between deterring the most needy of potential students and maintaining a total service when finance is limited?

What about **the contribution of broadcasting?** This was one of the prime movers of the campaign: how was it perceived? We have to report that the perceptions were ambivalent. The overwhelming majority of those interviewed — administrators, organisers, tutors and, impressively, the students — were agreed that *On the Move* was lively and interesting. Organisers and tutors thought that the programme had been a major influence in recruitment and in creating public awareness of adult illiteracy as a problem. The effects were also felt in the educational world: there were instances of teachers taking advantage of the broadcasts to refurbish their ideas on teaching the basic literacy skills to children. This programme, because of its excellence as television and because of its viewing time at 6.05 pm on Sundays, provided a steady pressure on public consciousness. But though *On the Move* was most often identified, tutors and students thought rather of 'broadcasting' in a general sense. The impact of the literacy broadcasts was sharpened by the interest shown by producers of other BBC programmes and the developing support of the Independent companies.

As a stimulus to recruiting the broadcasts were superlative; but we found that in the majority of cases, even when the student phoned in to a central referral point himself, there existed some personal pressure which tipped the scales and finally brought him to the point of making contact. Often these personal pressures were exerted by a member of the student's family, by a doctor, an employer, a social worker and so on. Where the personal support was then sustained, it was more likely that the student would continue in his plan to join. Often the student would do so successfully if an organiser established

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contact quickly and added his supportive influence. Thus, recruitment seems to be more an interaction of local pressures and national information than had been first thought.

There was evidence to suggest that the television programmes were not entirely without influence on students, even though they were not designed as instructional programmes and though most students watched only sporadically, some found, for example, that the experience of other students, often emotionally related during *On the Move*, sustained them, in much the same way as a fellow student's description of his experiences over a coffee break or in a group would be helpful. Perhaps the greatest direct benefit students derived from the content of the programmes was the comfort of the assertion that there were two million others like them. However, they sometimes over-reacted: for some, the programmes were 'insultingly at too low a level', or, through over-identification, disappointment occurred when a principal character was found to be 'just another actor'.

But students and tutors did not often use the broadcasts or video-recordings of programmes during their tuition period, for several reasons. First, meeting usually for no more than two hours per week, student and tutor wished to maximise the period spent on personal interaction. Secondly, tutors were encouraged in their training to create their own materials and to react to their situation pragmatically: the generality of the broadcasts did not seem to tutors to allow sufficient flexibility for this. Thirdly, many tutors felt that students could watch for themselves and the viewing would then be an increment to the tuition. A further reason was simply that very few of the tutors watched the programmes regularly. Many saw the occasional programme and no doubt some watched with their children: so it is impossible to believe that they were totally uninfluenced, but the influence was hardly ever acknowledged. Similarly, they often missed the radio programmes aimed specifically at them and claimed that they had not known of their scheduling within the *Lifelines* series.

In the light of all this experience and despite the reservations, it is obvious that the broadcaster must have an integral role to play in any national development in popular adult education. In this particular enterprise, however, there is evidence that the declared student body is only the tip of an iceberg and that broadcasting has therefore been able to offer only a partial

solution to the problem of recruitment.

Recruitment was the most commonly mentioned effect of the broadcasts, however, and the provision of national referral points by telephone was of great importance. Most would-be volunteers had easy access to a telephone and for them the referral service worked well. By definition it also worked well for the students who used it, though some tutors said that the cost of telephoning a national, or even a regional, number was too high, given the circumstances of their students. It was also put to us by social workers aware of circumstances in deprived urban areas that no reliance could be placed on a telephone referral system for recruitment among the most disadvantaged groups of the population: that is, those who suffer not only from poor literacy skills but from poor housing, vandalised telephone boxes and so on.

To sum up this section on broadcasting we recall the words of so many of the organisers we interviewed, that without the BBC initiative little momentum would have been achieved for adult literacy. Whether the campaign as a whole met the goals that the broadcasters had hoped for remains a question: the small impact of the radio programmes for tutors holds an important lesson. On the other hand, the effects of the television programmes in recruiting students and volunteers, and in bringing the whole question of adult sub-literacy into the open were remarkably impressive.

Did these benefits justify the amount of air-time that the Project used? In the first year, there can be no doubt that they did, but the slight recognition by tutors of the relevance of the television to their teaching led a number of organisers to suggest that, after the first year, and especially after the 6.05 pm slot on Sundays was lost, the effort put into the television programmes was no longer justified. On the other hand we have no way of knowing how many were simply following the programmes on their own and so felt no need to join a local scheme. Similarly, the question whether a similar project could be developed for, say, a broadly conceived campaign for adult basic education is one which this research cannot answer.

Organisational structures form another basis for assessment. They sprang from an interaction of central initiatives and local perceptions that proved to be more complex and continuous than anyone envisaged. The experience of BAS, which largely inspired the original pressure group, derived from local

schemes and it was an act of faith that it could be translated to a national scale. When the national initiatives of BBC and ALRA began, they had to make guesses about the way to proceed. They consulted as widely as they could — for example in the piloting of *On the Move* — but field provision at that stage was very limited and there were not many experienced practitioners to consult.

In one sense this was fortunate. It meant that the initial moves between centre and localities could be on an informal and personal level. The BBC liaison officer and the director of ALRA were able to build up a network of personal contacts as individual areas moved successively into the scheme. By 1977 local schemes had outgrown this stage: organisers wanted regional or area liaison (for example, to exploit the resources of local radio rather than the central transmissions of the BBC) and the BBC officer and the two consultants then appointed by ALRA could not meet this demand. But there is also evidence that the LEA staff themselves did not really perceive the value of the advisory service that was available from ALRA.

In other words, the effectiveness of central initiatives such as those of ALRA and the broadcasters depends more on how they are received and interpreted locally than on the plans and intentions at the centre. As with other elements in adult literacy, the personal relationships are all-important and both ALRA and the BBC Project team were fortunate in being able to establish good relationships at the outset. But it must remain an open question whether a more extensive or more sophisticated campaign, which could not begin at the personal level described above, could attain a similar local acceptance of national initiatives, whether by central Government or by broadcasters.

Local relationships illustrate the same difficulty on another plane. Very few areas had Local Development Councils for adult education as recommended in the Russell Report. Ad hoc literacy committees were set up in many places, sometimes for a quite small district, and they worked effectively in bringing together the multifarious interests from education, social services, industry and commerce, libraries, probation services and so on. If there was a weak link in these connections it was commonly with the employers: most organisers were aware that the workplace was underused as a means of contacting potential students.

The formal proceedings of these committees however were generally augmented by informal personal networks and it was these that the organisers found of greater value. For example, both social workers and probation officers referred potential students for literacy tuition and the almost universal experience was that such students disappeared again very quickly. Following them up by means of a personal word with the social worker might bring them back; but to do so by formal bureaucratic channels was always a failure. Or again, the first crop of telephone referrals were assiduously sought out by local organisers, even to the extent of making three or four visits to the home before contact was made. As numbers grew, that degree of persistence became impossible: one attempt at contact, by a visit or even by telephone, was all that could be managed. No doubt some potential students were thus lost. But the problem of creating an organisation that can deal efficiently with numbers and yet retain the essentially personal touch that adult literacy students need is one that has to be solved before a much more extensive provision can be offered.

The local organisers were thus the key to the effectiveness of the organisation: they *were* the personal service just mentioned. As has been said, the burdens on them were often inordinate and the qualities they required were manifold: tact, sympathy with the students' lot but firmness in resisting overdependency, organising skill and a good memory, familiarity with the range of teaching materials likely to be needed by students of different standards, and readiness to counsel tutors on the whole gamut of teaching problems.

Organisers came from many backgrounds — the remedial service, school-teaching, administration. Often they were housewives looking for a return to employment. No pattern of a 'correct' background emerged; but those with an insight into the role of adult education and the place of literacy within that role were perceived as particularly effective by education officers, and by tutors and students. There were of course some who displayed that insight without having had any formal contact with professional adult education, but that was unusual.

Where an organiser was on hand at a tuition centre, whether directing the tuition or simply overseeing a team of volunteers, the positive effect on the quality of the work was most marked.

Advice was continuously available, re-matching of pairs could be done without delay or embarrassment, and above all the organiser was able to monitor progress regularly. By contrast, the uncertainty of organisers about home-based pairs was a constant anxiety and some spent time they could ill afford in telephoning tutors to try to keep in touch. The shift away from home tuition and towards groups meeting in neutral centres was a response to this uncertainty. Yet half the organisers interviewed believed that some home-based tuition was necessary, if only as an induction, for selected students. On the other hand, many had discovered that the care taken in the early days about matching tutor with student was excessive, particularly where the normal procedure was to move from home to centre as soon as possible. Indeed, the very reluctance of some students to move on, and the cosy sociability that had descended upon some of the home pairs, may well have been due directly to that early quest for compatibility of personality in the matching.

These organisational problems raise questions about the proper role of organisers and the proper level of staffing for an expanded service. Can the all-purpose functions at present discharged by organisers be continued in a larger or more varied provision? And if some form of specialisation is to be introduced, what will be the consequent needs in terms of training? Few of the organisers felt they had received any relevant training except for their own training roles, and had simply learnt on the job. But the job is likely to change in a variety of ways and training for each of these will become imperative.

In general, however, the organisations built up at local level were undoubtedly effective *for the present size of the service.* This was confirmed by tutors and students everywhere. In the time available for schemes to be created it was a remarkable achievement and yet one more tribute to the adaptability of adult education to new opportunities.

III

The main direction of our research however was towards the students and their tutors. What we were after was the quality of their experience of teaching and learning. The main criteria by which we would judge the campaign therefore lie in that direc-

tion, for all the other considerations — of policies and costs, of recruitment and organisation — are there simply to enable an individual student to learn. How effectively did he do so?

The location of the tuition was a key factor. As indicated above, there was a general move from home-based to centre-based work. In part this was because it was found difficult to maintain a steady balance both of numbers and of geographical distribution between the influx of students and the training of tutors. It was much more due to the problems of monitoring home tuition and of giving the necessary support to the volunteers. In a few places this resulted in a move to replace volunteers entirely by professional tutors with three to five students each; though a few volunteers with a teaching background might be kept on because of their ability to engage with groups. But much more generally there was a firm belief that the lay volunteer had a very positive contribution to make.

The most encouraging reason for the trend towards centre-based work, however, lay in changing perceptions of the aims of adult literacy tuition. As more students joined schemes from 1975 onwards, recognition grew that a student who had known failure during ten years' schooling, and whose job gave scant motivation to practise reading and writing, had a long furrow to plough. Above all he had to be inspired with a belief in himself which would be sufficient to bear the inevitable disappointments. He needed the confidence to move out of isolation, and this required eventually some form of group experience. It might begin with simply a group Christmas social, or the informal meeting with others at a coffee break; the form might be one-to-one within a group, or small groups sharing one tutor, or four or five students forming a class. There were no fixed formulae: everything depended on the degree of confidence a particular student had attained. The art of the process lay in deciding when a student was ready for the change (and equally, if or when a student should be returned to a one-to-one pair for personally concentrated tuition). Many volunteer tutors working at home were insufficiently experienced to effect this translation and to spot the moment when it could be made. Nor could the professional organiser help if there was no means of monitoring each pair.

Diagnostic test and formal assessments of progress could be helpful in making these decisions, as well as in the initial placing of students. But there was a growing and widespread

rejection of standardised tests based on children's reading ages which could only recall previous failure and damage self-confidence: imagine a man of 45 announcing to his wife that he had attained the reading-age of a child of 8½! We suspected that such tests were set more often for the tutor's benefit than for the student's.

Tuition methods were generally based on the need to engage the student's interest at all times. Thus tutors, having been exposed to some eight or twelve hours' training largely on skill methods, and having been exhorted to use their own home-made materials, used forms, catalogues and so on, which were linked to the student's experience and daily life. The student rarely influenced the tutor's choice of subject matter and practice material except in so far as he agreed to it. There was little indication that any given type of resource material used in this way had an advantage. Rather, successful tuition depended on the personality and enthusiasm of the tutor and the student's response to the tutor's lead.

Lessons generally centred on the simpler skills of reading and writing; comprehension of the subject matter came as much from the tutor's informal conversation as from literacy exercises. Consequently, many students enlarged their knowledge of current affairs, geography, music and other subjects through their discussions with their tutors, and those tutors with wide knowledge or who shared common enthusiasms with their students were often most successful. The importance of such activity was not foreseen and thus received little emphasis in training courses. Significantly, the evidence for its place in tuition came mainly from what students said. In short, whether in pairs or in groups, students made best progress where they perceived that someone was making a personal response to them and to their interests.

Nearly all students experienced times of little progress and of depression and then the sense of failure often overpowered both student and tutor. It was at times like this that many tutors, rather than persevere in skill tuition, revised their relationship to one of supportive friendship. Students' personality problems sometimes emerged under such stress and tutors found themselves unable to cope. Immediate advice was important, for once the student's confidence was dented any delay could lead to withdrawal.

The students' educational progress cannot be summed up in

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a simple assessment. The individuality of their experiences, the range of their remedial literacy requirements and the variations of social context within which they came forward make generalisation difficult.

All the students clearly valued the fresh chance they had been given. The limitations of confidentiality on the research meant that we were unable to meet any of those who went no further than the initial referral, but many who received tuition for only a short period felt that they had benefited from meeting a sympathetic person and were better able to bear their problem. Some who, in our terms, left early were said to have been satisfied, having solved a specific and limited literacy problem connected with their work or domestic lives. The main body of those who persevered in tuition made progress in their skills that was slow but steady, and there were a very few examples of astonishingly rapid progress towards reading and writing.

It is debatable, however, whether mastery of literacy skills is to be regarded as the measure of progress. In their view of the raw evidence, all three research associates concluded that the mark of the successful student was a gain in confidence, without which progress in the skills would not take place. Another contemporary study (Charnley and Jones 1978) has suggested certain overall criteria of success that emerged from an analysis of students' progress in literacy tuition. In order of importance, these are: *affective personal achievements* ('I feel better in myself'); *affective social achievements* ('Yes, a lot easier to get on with the kids'); *socio-economic achievements* ('I was able to get promotion at work'); *cognitive achievements* ('I can read better'); and *enactive achievements* ('I can now fill up a cheque by myself').

All these are inter-related but the key to the order of importance lies in this concept which we are calling confidence and which is summed up by the remark, echoed by so many students, 'I feel better in myself'. This is not simply confidence in the ability to learn, though that is part of it. Certainly it is not confidence in the ability to act in new ways: the enactive achievements come last in order of importance, and there was a marked and widespread reluctance to *use* newly acquired literacy skills in public and before strangers. What the students gained was a feeling of being made worthy, of being not an isolated instance of poor ability in literacy but one of many

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with similar problems. In the process of interaction with tutors and fellow students they were learning to value themselves, and to accept themselves, as never before; and this access of confidence was basic to any advance in the skills of reading and writing.

We would argue that this outcome reveals an educational experience that is wider and more significant than the remedying of deficiencies of skill: it lies among the best objectives of all adult education. The implication is that the role of the tutor — even the volunteer tutor — is that of the adult educator, rather than the remedial instructor. Thus the effectiveness of the whole literacy service, the validity of the tutor-training and the achievements of individual students will be evinced as much by this progress towards general educational goals as by specific increments in literacy skills.

Early in the campaign claims were freely made about students' striking progress in literacy skills. These claims were not borne out in general experience. But it was never to be expected that adults with a long history of difficulty in literacy would enjoy Pauline conversions. Indeed, if there is any single lesson to be learned from the past three years it is that disadvantaged adults require unlimited patience to sustain their confidence, that apparently infinitesimal progress in learning is, for them, remarkable, and that we should think of tuition stretching over years rather than months. Whatever expectations we may have had therefore of changes in life-style as a result of improved literacy, these will be slow to appear. Certainly in the interviews with students there was little direct testimony, but it may well be that the research period was too short for that. A few students got better jobs, a few took up new activities or interests, but these were the exceptions. The progress reported by the great majority was in self-esteem and confidence and, as a result, many formed better relationships with family, friends or workmates. The strong impression remains that this resulted as much from the general educational experience as from an improved ability to read and write.

The learning of the tutors must not be left out of account in assessing the campaign. Very many of them spoke eloquently about their discoveries in their dealings with their students. They learnt about fellow men whose difficulties they had not previously imagined, about the remarkable resilience and adaptability with which those difficulties had been borne,

about the shortcomings of an educational system from which they themselves had generally done well (some of them became very angry over this), and above all about their own reserves of tolerance and understanding. It would not be excessive to claim that the total amount of learning by the tutors was at least as great as that which they helped their students to attain.

How then do we sum up the campaign so far? On the debit side there are undoubtedly areas for concern. Some schemes seemed to accept unduly low rates of persistence. Some seemed too narrowly oriented towards specific training in literacy skills, for we have already suggested that the aims of many of the literacy projects could well be re-examined in the context of the aims of adult education in general. Similarly, many of the encouraging trends we have noted have still some way to go — for example, the work specification of organisers, the provision and content of training courses with broadening aims, the back-up of tutors, the progression of students from one-to-one pairs into groups, the follow-up and counselling of past students, the potential of local and national broadcasting, and the provision of adequate local finance.

But the benefits must be listed too. First, although we have eschewed quantitative assessments in the design of the research, the total numbers who have been brought into participation during the research period from 1975 to 1977 are worth repeating. Over one hundred thousand adults who, by definition, will have had minimal contact with education since leaving school, have been given the opportunity to learn; and something like half of these have remained in tuition long enough to improve their skills and their confidence in themselves. Over sixty thousand volunteers have offered help, thereby showing what vast reserves there are in our communities, not only of good intentions, but of potential for informal educational development. About forty thousand of these have worked with students over a substantial period of time and have thus contributed significantly to the nation's educational service. The estimated twenty thousand schoolteachers who have taken part in the schemes have gained new insights into the general problems of teaching reading and writing, and into the contexts of adult life for which their pupils need preparation.

Secondly, there are the effects on the public mind. There can be no doubt that *On the Move* caught the public's imagination

and brought the matter of adult sub-literacy into the open. The impact was reinforced by other popular BBC programmes, by Independent Television and local radio, and by the press. The effect of all this in making students feel less ashamed of their state has been recorded; it may be presumed that a similar benefit might also have been felt by some at least of those who did not come forward, or who did not stay.

Thirdly, there are educational innovations which are there as guides for the future: the combination of sustained broadcasting with local tuition through a telephone referral service; the enlistment of volunteers through the same means; the linking of specially prepared publications with the training of tutors and with local teaching provision; and the central Resource Agency with its pump-priming grants from earmarked Government funds and its publishing and advisory services.

Fourthly, there is the recognition, out of the experience of the literacy projects and especially the perceptions of the real nature and needs of students, that a wider service of adult basic education is essential and that the literacy work forms a foundation for it.

But let an individual student have the last word:

— I didn't think I needed help then, but when I saw it on the TV — I really did, I thought, Right! There's people there that are willing to help, so if they're willing to help me, I'm willing to have a go as well. So I just phoned . . . Because I've a little boy of five who's off school many a time and I can't write a letter. But now I can — put one together. IT'S SUPER, YOU KNOW!! IT'S A NEW WORLD!! IT'S UNBELIEVABLE!!

APPENDIX I

Schedule of BBC Broadcasts

1975/76
On The Move 50 ten-minute programmes (Originally called Level 1)
Transmitted Sundays 6.05 p.m. BBC 1
12 October — 14 December 1975
4 January — 3 October 1976
Repeated Thursdays 12.15 p.m. BBC 1
16 October — 18 December 1975
8 January — 7 October 1976
Repeated Saturdays 10.25 a.m. BBC 1
18 October — 20 December 1975
10 January — 9 October 1976

1976/77
On The Move Repeat
Transmitted Sundays 6.05 p.m. BBC 1
10 October — 12 December 1976
2 January — 10 April 1977
at 1.40 p.m. — 17 April — 16 October 1977
On the Move Specials — 10 October and 17 October 1976
Repeated Thursdays 12.35 p.m. BBC 1
28 October — 16 December 1976
6 January — 20 October 1977

1977/78
On The Move Repeat
Transmitted Sundays 11.40 a.m. BBC 1
23 October — 18 December 1977
8 January — 15 October 1978
Repeated Thursdays 12.35 p.m. BBC 1
27 October — 22 December 1977
12 January — 19 October 1978

1976/77
Your Move 20 twenty-five minute programmes (originally called Level 2)
Transmitted Sundays 12.10 p.m. BBC 1

10 October — 12 December 1976
9 January — 13 March 1977
Repeated Thursdays 7.05 p.m. BBC 2
14 October — 16 December 1976
13 January — 17 March 1977

1977/78
Your Move Repeat
Transmitted Sundays 11.50 a.m. BBC 1
23 October — 18 December 1977
8 January — 19 March 1978
Repeated Thursdays 7.05 p.m. BBC 2
27 October — 22 December 1977
12 January — 23 March 1978

1977
Next Move 20 five-minute radio programmes
Transmitted Thursdays 6.45 p.m. Radio 2
3 March — 14 July 1977
Repeated Sundays 5.50 p.m. Radio 2
6 March — 17 July 1977

1977/78
Helping With Spelling 4 thirty-minute radio programmes
Transmitted Tuesdays 7.00 p.m. Radio 3
6 December 1977 — 3 January 1978 (except 27th December)
Repeated Mondays 7.00 p.m. Radio 3
9 — 30 January 1978

1978
Move On 20 five-minute radio programmes
Transmitted Thursdays 5.15 p.m. Radio 2
9 March — 20 July 1978
Repeated Sundays 5.50 p.m. Radio 2
12 March — 23 July 1978

1975/76
Teaching Adults to Read 8 thirty-minute radio programmes
Transmitted Tuesdays 7.00 p.m. Radio 3
28 October — 16 December 1975

Repeated Tuesdays 7.00 p.m. Radio 3
25 May — 13 July 1976

1977
Teaching Adults to Read Repeat, 9 thirty-minute radio programmes
Transmitted Tuesdays 7.00 p.m. Radio 3
5 April — 31 May 1977

APPENDIX 2

Statistical background information provided by the BBC

Publications Sales as at 1/9/77 (to the nearest 100)

On The Move	(published Oct. 1975, Price £1.00)	53,000
Your Move	(published Oct. 1976, Price £1.20)	29,000
Next Move	(published Feb. 1977	
	Book Price £0.90)	11,500
	Cassette Price £3.24)	1,300
Adult Literacy Handbook		
	(published May 1975, Price £1.10)	55,500

Audience Size

All figures are expressed as a percentage of UK inhabitants aged five and over.

On The Move Sunday evening transmission BBC-1 6.05 pm.
(Source: BBC Audience Research Daily Survey of Viewing & Listening)

	1975 4th ¼	1976 1st ¼	2nd ¼	3rd ¼	4th ¼	1977 1st ¼
Total	3.2	4.1	2.1	2.4	3.1	2.8
Men	3.1	4.0	1.7	2.2	2.8	2.4
Women	3.3	4.3	2.5	2.7	3.5	3.3
Middle Class	4.0	4.9	2.2	2.3	3.4	3.0
Working Class	2.9	3.8	2.0	2.5	2.9	2.8

These figures suggest that during this period (October 1975-March 1977) on average between 2% and 4% of the population watched any one Sunday transmission of *On The*

Move. In the audience women were represented more frequently than men and the middle class than the working class, compared to their proportions in the nation at large. In fact however the audience consisted of many more working class people than middle class. (Class is here categorised by the occupation of the head of household.)

On The Move Saturday morning transmission on BBC-1

	1975 4th ¼	1976 1st ¼	2nd ¼	3rd ¼
Total	1.5	2.1	1.7	2.2
Men	1.9	2.0	1.7	2.5
Women	1.2	2.2	1.8	2.0
Middle Class	1.4	2.2	2.1	2.0
Working Class	1.6	2.1	1.6	2.4

Saturday audiences during the twelve months of transmissions averaged between 1.5% and 2.2% of the total population, there being no distinct sex or class patterns of viewing. The audience however consisted predominantly of children aged fifteen and under.

The Thursday transmission achieved a very small audience throughout, never reaching more than 0.2% of the total population.

A separate BBC Audience Research enquiry 'Public knowledge of and attitudes towards the Adult Literacy Campaign' is being carried out in three stages; the second stage of the field work occurred in March 1977.

On The Move

This second survey revealed that by that date 82% of adults claimed to know that there was a television series called *On the Move*. One year earlier the figure had been 72%. Knowledge was highest amongst the A/B social groups (91%) and lowest among the D/E groups (76%).

45% knew of the existence of the BBC book, (compared to 40% in 1976). 67% claimed to have seen at least one programme of the *On the Move* series (compared to 54% in the previous year). The A/B group had the highest proportion of viewers (73%) and the D/E group the lowest (63%). 69% of men and 65% of women had watched. 2% claimed to have *looked* at a copy of the book.

Your Move

Audience figures for *Your Move* in 1976 averaged out at about 0.1% on Thursday evening on BBC-2 and 0.2% on Sunday midday on BBC-1.

The BBC's survey shows that overall 22% claimed to know of the existence of the series (29% of the A/Bs and 18% of the D/Es). 7% knew of the existence of the book (10% of the A/Bs and 6% of the D/Es).

12% claimed to have watched at least one programme of the *Your Move* series (15% of A/Bs, 11% of D/Es). The number of those having looked at a copy of the accompanying workbook was too small to register as a percentage.

Next Move

11% claimed to know of the existence of *Next Move* (just commencing transmission at the time of the survey) (18% A/Bs and 11% D/Es). In this case a higher percentage of D/Es were aware of the series than were the C2 group, who registered 7%.

2% claimed knowledge of the *Next Move* book (7% of the A/Bs, 2% of D/Es, 1% C2).

3% claimed to have heard a programme in the series (6% A/B, 3% D/E, 2% C2). The number who had looked at a copy of the book was too small to register as a percentage.

Teaching Adults to Read

12% were aware of the radio series for tutors *Teaching Adults to Read*. (17% A/B, 12% D/E). This level of awareness is markedly less than had been the case in the first part of the survey in the previous March (23%) when the series had been transmitted twice.

15% were aware of the accompanying BBC Handbook (23% A/Bs, 13% D/Es) compared with 14% in the previous year.

5% claimed to have listened to at least one of the programmes, a drop from 8% in the previous year. (6% A/Bs, 5% D/Es). 1% had looked through the book, the same percentage as in 1976 (3% A/Bs, 0% D/Es).

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